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**“HAWORTH’S.”**

**VOL. I.**



# "HAWORTH'S"

A Novel

BY

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

AUTHOR OF "THAT LASS O' LOWRIE'S"

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



London

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# “HAWORTH’S.”

## CHAPTER I.

### TWENTY YEARS.

TWENTY years ago ! Yes, twenty years ago this very day ; and there were men among them who remembered it. Only two, however ; and these were old men whose day was passed, and who would soon be compelled to give up work. Naturally upon this occasion these two were the centre figures in the group of talkers who were discussing the topic of the hour.

“Aye,” said old Tipton, “I ’member it as well as if it wur yesterday, for aw it’s twenty year sin’. Eh, but it wur cowl ! Th’ cowdest neet i’ th’ winter ; an’ th’ winter wur a bad un. Th’ snow wur two feet deep. Theer wur a big rush o’ work, an’ we’d had to keep th’ foires goin’ arter medneet. Theer wur a chap workin’ then by th’

name o' Bob Latham—he's dead long sin',—an' he went to th' foundry door to look out. Yo' know how some chaps is about seein' how cowl it is, or how hot, or how heavy th' rain's comin' down. Well, he wur one o' them soart, an' he mun go an' tak' a look out at th' snow.

"'Coom in, tha foo',' sez I to him. 'Whatten tha stickin' tha thick yed owt theer fur, as if it wur midsummer, i'stead o' being cowl enow to freeze th' tail off a brass jackass. Coom in wi' tha.'

"'Aye,' he sez, a-chatterin' his teeth, 'it is cowl sure-ly ; it's enow to stiffen a mon.'

"'I wish it ud stiffen thee,' I sez, 'so as we mought set thee up as a monyment at th' front o' th' 'Sylum.'

"'An' then aw at onct I heard him gie a jump an' a bit o' a yell like under his breath : 'God-a-moighty !' he sez.

"'Summat i' th' way he said it soart o' wakened me.

"'What's up ?' I sez.

"'Coom here,' sez he, 'theer's a dead lad here.'

"'An' when I getten to him, sure enow I thowt

he wur reet. Drawed up i' a heap nigh th' door theer *wur* a lad lyin' on th' snow, an' th' stiff look on him mowt ha' gi'en ony mon a turn.

"Latham wur bendin' ower him, wi' his teeth chatterin'.

"'Dom thee!' I sez, 'why dost na tha lift him?'

"Betwixt us we did lift him, an' carry him into th' Works, an' laid him down nigh one o' the furnaces, an' th' fellys coom crowdin' round to look at him. He wur a lad about nine year owd, an' strong-built, but he looked more than half clemmed; an' arter we'st rubbed him a good bit, an' gotten him warmed enow to coom round i' a manner, th' way he set up an' ztared round wur summat queer.

"'Mesters,' he sez, hoarse an' shaky, 'ha' ony on yo' gotten a bit o' bread?'

"Bob Latham's missus had put him up summat to eat, an' he browt it an' gie it to him. Well, th' little chap a'most snatched it, an' crammed it into his mouth i' great mouthfuls. His honds trembled so he could scarce howd th' meat an' bread; an' in a bit, us as wur standin'

lookin' on seed him soart o' choke, as if he wur goin' to cry; but he swallyed it down an' did na.

" 'I haven't had nowt to eat i' a time,' sez he.

" 'How long?' sez I.

" Seemt like he thowt it ower a bit afore he answered, and then he sez :

" 'I think it mun ha' been four days.'

" 'Wheer are yo' fro'?' one chap axed.

" 'I coom a long way,' he sez. 'I've bin on th' road three week.' An' then he looks up sharp. 'I run away fro' th' Union,' he sez.

" That wur th' long an' short on it—he had th' pluck to run away fro' th' Union, an' he'd had th' pluck to stond out agen clemmin' and freezin' until flesh an' blood ud howd out no longer, an' he'd fell down at th' foundry door.

" 'I seed th' loight o' th' furnaces,' he sez, 'an' I tried to run; but I went blind an' fell down. I thowt,' he sez, as cool as a cucumber, 'as I wur deein'.'

" Well, we kep him aw neet an' took him to th' mester i' th' mornin', an' th' mester gie him a place, an' he stayed. An' he's bin i' th' foundry

fro' that day to this, an' how he's worked an' getten on yo' see for yoresens—fro' beein' at ivvery one's beck an' call to buyin' out Flixton an' settin' up for hissen. It's th' 'Haworth Iron Works' fro' to-day on, an' he will na mak' a bad mester, eyther."

"Nay, he will na," commented another of the old ones. "He's a pretty rough chap, but he'll do—will Jem Haworth."

There was a slight confused movement in the group.

"Here he cooms," exclaimed an outsider.

The man who entered the doorway—a strongly-built fellow, whose handsome clothes sat rather ill on his somewhat uncouth body—made his way through the crowd with small ceremony. He met the glances of the workmen with a rough nod, and went straight to the managerial desk. But he did not sit down; he stood up, facing those who waited as if he meant to dispose of the business in hand as directly as possible.

"Well, chaps," he said, "here we are."

A slight murmur, as of assent, ran through the room.



"Aye, mester," they said; "here we are."

"Well," said he, "you know why, I suppose. We're taking a fresh start, and I've something to say to you. I've had my say here for some time; but I've not had my way, and now the time's come when I *can* have it. D——n it! I'm going to have the biggest place in England, and the best place too. 'Haworth's' sha'n't be second to none. I've set my mind on that. I said I'd stand here some day,"—with a blow on the desk,—"and here I am. I said I'd make my way, and I've done it. From to-day on, this here's 'Haworth's,' and to show you I mean to start fair and square, if there's a chap here that's got a grievance, let that chap step out and speak his mind to Jem Haworth himself. Now's his time." And he sat down.

There was another stir and murmur, this time rather of consultation; then one of them stepped forward.

"Mester," he said, "I'm to speak fur 'em."

Haworth nodded.

"What I've gotten to say," said the man, "is

said easy. Them as thowt they'd gotten grievances is willin' to leave the settlin' on 'em to Jem Haworth."

"That's straight enough," said Haworth. "Let 'em stick to it and there's not a chap among 'em sha'n't have his chance. Go into Greyson's room, lads, and drink luck to 'Haworth's.' Tipton and Harrison, you wait a bit."

Tipton and Harrison lingered with some degree of timidity. By the time the room had emptied itself, Haworth seemed to have fallen into a reverie. He leaned back in his chair, his hands in his pockets, and stared gloomily before him. The room had been silent five minutes before he aroused himself with a start. Then he leaned forward and beckoned to the two, who came and stood before him.

"You two were in the place when I came," he said. "You"—to Tipton—"were the fellow as lifted me from the snow."

"Aye, mester," was the answer, "twenty year ago to-neet."

"The other fellow——"

"Dead! Eh! Long sin'. Ivvery chap as

wur theer, dead an' gone, but me an' him," with jerk toward his comrade.

Haworth put his hand in his vest pocket, and drew forth a crisp piece of paper, evidently placed there for a purpose.

"Here," he said, with some awkwardness, "divide that between you."

"Betwixt us two!" stammered the old man. "It's a ten-pun-note, mester!"

"Yes," with something like shamefacedness. "I used to say to myself when I was a youngster, that every chap who was in the Works that night should have a five-pound-note to-day. Get out, old lads, and get as drunk as you please. I've kept my word. But—" his laugh breaking off in the middle,— "I wish there'd been more of you to keep it up together."

Then they were gone, chuckling in senile delight over their good luck, and he was left alone. He glanced round the room — a big handsome one, well filled with massive office-furniture, and yet wearing the usual empty, barren look.

"It's taken twenty years," he said; "but

I've done it. It's *done* — and yet there isn't as much of it as I used to think there would be."

He rose from his chair, and went to the window to look out, rather impelled by restlessness than motive. The prospect, at least, could not have attracted him. The place was closed in by tall and dingy houses, whose slate roofs shone with the rain which drizzled down through the smoky air. The ugly yard was wet and had a deserted look; the only living object which caught his eye was the solitary figure of a man, who stood waiting at the iron gates.

At the sight of this man he started backward with an exclamation.

"The devil take the chap!" he said. "There he is again."

He took a turn across the room, but he came back again and looked out once more, as if he found some irresistible fascination in the sight of the frail, shabbily-clad figure.

"Yes," he said, "it's him, sure enough. I never saw another fellow with the same done-for look. I wonder what he wants."

He went to the door and, opening it, spoke to a man who chanced to be passing.

"Floxham, come in here," he said. Floxham was a well-oiled and burly fellow, plainly fresh from the engine-room. He entered without ceremony, and followed his master to the window. Haworth pointed to the man at the gate.

"There's a chap," he said, "that I've been running up against here and there for the last two months. The fellow seems to spend his time wandering up and down the streets. I'm hanged if he don't make me think of a ghost. He goes against the grain with me, somehow. Do you know who he is, and what's up with him?"

Floxham glanced towards the gateway, and then nodded his head dryly.

"Aye," he answered, "he's the inventin' chap as has bin thirty year at work at some contrapshun, an' hasn't browt it to a head yet. He lives i' our street, an' me an' my missus hes been noticin' him fur a good bit. He'll noan finish th' thing he's at. He's on his last legs now. He took th' contrapshun to 'Merica thirty year ago, when he first getten th' idea into his head, an' he

browt it back a bit sin' a'most i' th' same fix he took it. Me an' my missus think he's a bit soft i' th' yed."

Haworth pushed by him to get nearer the window. A slight moisture started out upon his forehead.

"Thirty year!" he exclaimed. "By God!"

There might have been something in his excitement which had its effect upon the man outside. He seemed as it were to awaken slowly from a fit of lethargy. He glanced up at the window, and moved slowly forward.

"He's made up his mind to come in," said Floxham.

"What does he want?" said Haworth, with a sense of physical uneasiness. "Confound the fellow!" trying to shake off the feeling with a laugh. "What does he want with me—to-day?"

"I can go out an' turn him back," said Floxham.

"No," answered Haworth. "You can go back to your work. I'll hear what he has to say. I've nought else to do just now."

Floxham left him, and he went back to the big

arm-chair behind the table. He sat down and turned over some papers, not rid of his uneasiness even when the door opened and his visitor came in. He was a tall slender man, who stooped, and was narrow-chested; he was gray, hollow-eyed, and haggard. He removed his shabby hat, and stood before the table a second, in silence.

"Mr. Haworth?" he said, in a gentle, absent-minded voice. "They told me this was Mr. Haworth's room."

"Yes," he answered, "I'm Haworth."

"I want"—a little hoarsely, and faltering—"to get some work to do. My name is Murdoch. I've spent the last thirty years in America, but I'm a Lancashire man. I went to America on business—which has not been successful—yet. I—I have worked here before,"—with a glance around him,—“and I should like to work here again. I did not think it would be necessary, but—that does not matter. Perhaps it will only be temporary. I must get work.”

In the last sentence his voice faltered more than ever. He seemed suddenly to awaken, and

bring himself back to his first idea, as if he had not intended to wander from it.

“I—I must get work,” he repeated.

The effect he produced upon the man he appealed to was peculiar. Jem Haworth almost resented his frail appearance. He felt it an uncomfortable thing to confront just at this hour of his triumph. He had experienced the same sensation, in a less degree, when he rose in the morning and looked out of his window upon the murky sky and falling rain. He would almost have given a thousand pounds for clear, triumphant sunshine.

And yet, in spite of this, he was not quite as brusque as usual when he made his answer.

“I’ve heard of you,” he said. “You’ve had ill-luck.”

Stephen Murdoch shifted his hat from hand to hand.

“I don’t know,” he replied slowly. “I’ve not called it that yet. The end has been slow, but I think it’s sure. It will come some——”

Haworth made a rough gesture.



"By George!" he exclaimed, "hav'n't you given the thing up yet?"

Murdoch fell back a pace, and stared at him in a stunned way.

"Given it up!" he repeated. "Yet?"

"Look here!" said Haworth. "You'd better do it, if you hav'n't. Take my advice and have done with it. You're not a young chap, and if a thing's a failure after thirty years' work——" he stopped, because he saw the man trembling nervously.

"Oh, I didn't mean to take the pluck out of you," he said bluntly, a moment later. "You must have had plenty of it to begin with, egad, or you'd never have stood it this long."

"I don't know that it was pluck," still quivering. "I've lived on it so long that it would not give *me* up; I think that's it."

Haworth dashed off a couple of lines on a slip of paper and tossed it to him. "Take that to Greyson," he said, "and you'll get your work; and if you have anything to complain of, come to me."

Murdoch took the paper, and held it hesitatingly.

"I—perhaps I ought not to have asked for it to-day," he said nervously. "I'm not a business man, and I didn't think of it. I came in because I saw you. I'm going to London to-morrow, and shall not be back for a week."

"That's all right," said Haworth. "Come then."

He was not sorry to see his visitor turn away, after uttering a few simple words of thanks. It would be a relief to see the door close after him. But when it had closed, to his discomfiture it opened again. The thin, poorly-clad figure reappeared.

"I heard in the town," said the man, his cheek flushing faintly, "of what has happened here to-day. Twenty years have brought you better luck than thirty have brought me."

"Yes," answered Haworth; "my luck's been good enough as luck goes."

"It seems almost a folly"—falling into the meditative—"for *me* to wish you good luck in the future." And then, pulling himself together again as before, "It *is* a folly; but I wish it, nevertheless. Good luck to you!"

The door closed, and he was gone.

## CHAPTER II.

## THIRTY YEARS.

A LITTLE later, there stood at a window in one of the cheapest of the respectable streets, a woman whom the neighbours had become used to seeing there. She was a small person, with a repressed and watchful look in her eyes, and she was noticeable also to the Lancashire mind for a certain slightly foreign air, not easily described. It was in consequence of inquiries made concerning this foreign air, that the rumour had arisen that she was a "'Merican," and it was possibly a result of this rumour that she was regarded by the inhabitants of the street with a curiosity not unmingled with awe.

"Aye," said one honest matron. "Hoo's a 'Merican, fur my mester heerd it fro' the landlord. Eh! I would like to ax her summat about th' Blacks an' th' Indians."

But it was not easy to attain the degree of familiarity warranting the broaching of subjects so delicate and truly "'Merican." The stranger and her husband lived a simple and secluded life. It was said the woman had never been known to go out; it seemed her place to stand or sit at the window and watch for the man when he left the house on one of his mysterious errands in company with the wooden case he carried by its iron handle.

This morning she waited as usual; though the case had not gone out—rather to the disappointment of those interested, whose conjectures concerning its contents were varied and ingenious. When, at last, the tall stooping figure turned the corner, she went to the door and stood in readiness to greet its crossing the threshold.

Stephen Murdoch looked down at her with a kindly, absent smile.

"Thank you, Kitty," he said. "You are always here, my dear."

There was a narrow, hard, horse-hair sofa in the small room into which they passed, and he

went to it and lay down upon it, panting a little in an exhausted way, a hectic red showing itself on his hollow cheeks.

“Everything is ready, Kitty?” he said at last.

“Yes; all ready.”

He lay and looked at the fire, still breathing shortly.

“I never was as certain of it before,” he said. “I have thought I was certain, but—I never felt as I do now. And yet—I don’t know what made me do it—I went into Haworth’s this morning and asked for—for work.”

His wife dropped the needle she was holding. “For work!” she said.

“Yes—yes,” a little hastily. “I was there and saw Haworth at a window, and there have been delays so often that it struck me I might as well—not exactly depend on it——” He broke off and buried his face in his hands. “What am I saying?” he cried. “It sounds as if I did not believe in it.”

His wife drew her chair nearer to him. She was used to the task of consoling him; it had

become a habit. She spoke in an even, unemotional voice :

“ When Hilary comes,” she began.

“ It will be all over then,” he said, “ one way or the other. He will be here when I come back.”

“ Yes.”

“ I may have good news for him,” he said. “ I don’t see ”—faltering afresh—“ how it can be otherwise. Only I am so used to discouragement that—that I can’t see the thing fairly. It has been—a long time, Kitty.”

“ This man in London,” she said, “ can tell you the actual truth about it ? ”

“ He is the first mechanic and inventor in England,” he answered, his eye sparkling feverishly. “ He is a genius. If he says it is a success, it is one.”

The woman rose, and going to the fire bent down to stir it. She lingered over it for a moment or so before she came back.

“ When the lad comes,” he was saying, as if to himself, “ we shall have news for him.”

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Thirty years before he had reached America, a gentle, unpractical Lancashire man, with a frail physique and empty pockets. He had belonged in his own land to the better class of mechanics ; he had a knack of invention which somehow had never as yet brought forth any decided results. He had done one or two things which had gained him the reputation among his employers of being "a clever fellow," but they had always been things which had finally slipped into stronger or shrewder hands, and left his own empty. But at last there had come to him what seemed a new and wonderful thought. He had laboured with it in secret ; he had lain awake through long nights brooding over it in the darkness.

And then some one had said to him, "Why don't you try America ? America's the place for a thinking, inventing chap like you. It's fellows like you who are appreciated in a new country. Capitalists are not so slow in America. Why don't you carry your traps out there ?"

It was more a suggestion of boisterous good-fellowship than anything else ; but it awakened new fancies in Stephen Murdoch's mind. He

had always cherished vaguely grand visions of the New World, and they were easily excited.

“ I only wonder I never thought of it,” he said to himself.

He landed on the strange shore with high hopes in his breast, and a little unperfected model in his shabby trunk.

This was thirty years ago, and to-day he was in Lancashire again, in his native town, with the same little model among his belongings.

During the thirty years interval he had lived an unsettled, unsuccessful life. He had laboured faithfully at his task, but he had not reached the end which had been his aim. Sometimes he had seemed very near it, but it had always evaded him. He had drifted here and there bearing his work with him, earning a scant livelihood by doing anything chance threw in his way. It had always been a scant livelihood,—though after the lapse of eight years, in one of his intervals of hopefulness, he had married. On the first night they spent in their new home he had taken his wife into a little bare room set apart from the rest, and had shown her his model.



"I think a few weeks will finish it," he said.

The earliest recollections of their one child centred themselves round the small room and its contents. It was the one touch of romance and mystery in their narrow, simple life. The few spare hours the struggle for daily bread left the man were spent there; sometimes he even stole hours from the night, and yet the end was always one step further. His frail body grew frailer, his gentle temperament more excitable; he was feverishly confident and utterly despairing by turns. It was in one of his hours of elation that his mind turned again to his old home. He was sure at last that a few days' work would complete all, and then only friends were needed.

"England is the place, after all," he said. "They are more steady there, even if they are not so sanguine,—and there are men in Lancashire I can rely upon. We'll try Old England once again."

The little money hard labour and scant living had laid away for an hour of need, they brought with them. Their son had remained to dispose of their few possessions. Between this son and

the father there existed a strong affection, and Stephen Murdoch had done his best by him.

“I should like the lad,” he used to say, “to have a fairer chance than I had. I want him to have what I have lacked.”

As he lay upon the horse-hair sofa he spoke of him to his wife.

“There are not many like him,” he said. “He’ll make his way. I’ve sometimes thought that may be——” But he did not finish the sentence; the words died away from his lips, and he lay, perhaps thinking over them as he looked at the fire.

## CHAPTER III.

## "NOT FINISHED."

THE next morning he went upon his journey, and a few days later the son came. He was a tall young fellow, with a dark strongly-cut face, deep-set black eyes, and an unconventional air. Those who had been wont to watch his father watched him in his turn with quite as much interest. He seemed to apply himself to the task of exploring the place at once. He went out a great deal, and in all sorts of weather. He even presented himself at "Haworth's," and making friends with Floxham, got permission to go through the place and look at the machinery. His simple directness of speech at once baffled and softened Floxham, to whom the general rudeness of ordinary youth was obnoxious, as it is to every elderly and orthodox Briton.

"My name's Murdoch," he had said. "I'm an

American, and I'm interested in mechanics. If it isn't against your rules, I should like to see your machinery.”

Floxham pushed his cap off his forehead, and looked him over.

“Well, I'm dom'd,” he remarked.

It had struck him at first that this might be “cheek;” and then he had recognised that it was not.

Murdoch looked slightly bewildered.

“If there is any objection——” he began.

“Well, there is na,” said Floxham. “Coom on in.” And he cut the matter short by turning into the door.

“Did ony o' yo' chaps see that felly as come to look at th' machinery?” he said afterwards to his comrades. “He's fro' 'Merica, an' danged if he has na more head-fillin' than yo'd think fur. He goes round wi' his hands i' his pockits lookin' loike a foo', an' axin' questions as ud stump an owd un. He's that inventin' chap's lad. I dunnot go much wi' inventions mysen, but th' young chap's noan sich a foo' as he looks.”

Between mother and son but little had been said on the subject which reigned supreme in the mind of each. It had never been their habit to speak freely on the matter. On the night of Hilary's arrival, as they sat together, the woman had said, "He went away three days ago. He will be back at the end of the week. He hoped to have good news for you."

They had said little beyond this, but both had sat silent for some time afterward, and the conversation had become desultory and lagged somewhat until they separated for the night.

The week ended with fresh gusts of wind and heavy rains. Stephen Murdoch came home in a storm. On the day fixed for his return, his wife scarcely left her seat at the window for an hour. She sat looking out at the driving rain with a pale and rigid face. When the night fell, and she rose to close the shutters, Hilary saw that her hands shook.

She made the small room as bright as possible, and set the evening meal upon the table, and then sat down and waited again by the fire, cowering a little over it, but not speaking.

"His being detained is not a bad sign," said Hilary.

Half an hour later they both started from their seats at once. There was a loud summons at the door. It was Hilary who opened it, his mother following closely.

A great gust of wind blew the rain in upon them, and Stephen Murdoch, wet and storm-beaten, stepped in from the outer darkness, carrying the wooden case in his hands.

He seemed scarcely to see them. He made his way past them and into the lighted room with uncertain step. The light appeared to dazzle him. He went to the sofa weakly and threw himself upon it; he was trembling like a leaf; he had aged ten years.

"I—I——" And then he looked up at them as they stood before him waiting. "There is nought to say," he cried out; and burst into wild hysterical weeping, like that of a woman.

In obedience to a sign from his mother Hilary left the room. When after the lapse of half an hour he returned, all was quiet. His father lay upon the sofa with closed eyes, his mother sat

near him. He did not rise nor touch food, and only spoke once during the evening. Then he opened his eyes and turned them upon the case, which still stood where he had placed it.

"Take it away," he said in a whisper. "Take it away."

The next morning Hilary went to Floxham. "I want work," he said. "Do you think I can get it here?"

"What soart does tha want?" asked the engineer, not too encouragingly. "Th' gentlemanly soart as tha con do wi' kid-gloves an' an eye-glass on?"

"No," answered Murdoch, "not that sort."

Floxham eyed him keenly.

"Would tha tak owt as was offert thee?" he demanded.

"I think I would."

"Aw reet then! I'll gie thee a chance. Coom tha wi' me to th' engine-room, an' see how long tha'lt stick to it."

It was very ordinary work he was given to do, but he seemed to take quite kindly to it; in fact,

the manner in which he applied himself to the rough tasks which fell to his lot gave rise to no slight dissatisfaction among his fellow-workmen, and caused him to be regarded with small respect. He was usually a little ahead of the stipulated time, he had an equable temper, and yet, despite this and his civility, he seemed often more than half oblivious of the existence of those around him. A highly-flavoured joke did not awaken him to enthusiasm, and perhaps chiefest among his failings was noted the fact that he had no predilection for "sixpenny," and at his mid-day meal, which he frequently brought with him and ate in any convenient corner, he sat drinking cold water and eating his simple fare over a book.

"Th' chap is na more than haaf theer," was the opinion generally expressed.

Since the night of his return from his journey, Stephen Murdoch had been out no more. The neighbours watched for him in vain. The wooden case stood unopened in his room; he had never spoken of it. Through the long hours of the day he lay upon the sofa, either dozing or



in silent wakefulness, and at length instead of upon the sofa he lay upon the bed, not having strength to rise.

About three months after he had taken his place at Haworth's, Hilary came home one evening to find his mother waiting for him at the door. She shed no tears; there was in her face only a kind of hopeless terror.

"He sent me out of the room," she said. "He has been restless all day. He said he must be alone."

Hilary went upstairs. Opening the door he fell back a step. The model was in its old place on the work-table, and near it stood a tall, gaunt, white figure.

His father turned toward him.

He touched himself upon the breast. "I always told myself," he said, incoherently and hoarsely, "that there was a flaw in it—that something was lacking. I have said that for thirty years, and believed the day would come when I should remedy the wrong. To-night I *know*. The truth has come to me at last. There was no remedy. The flaw was in me," touching

his hollow chest, “in *me*. As I lay there I thought once that perhaps it was not real—that I had dreamed it all and might awake. I got up to see—to touch it. It is there! Good God!”—as if a sudden terror grasped him. “Not finished!—and I——”

He fell into a chair and sank forward, his hand falling upon the model hopelessly and unmeaningly.

Hilary raised him and laid his head upon his shoulder. He heard his mother at the door, and cried out loudly to her.

“Go back!” he said. “Go back! You must not come in.”

## CHAPTER IV.

## JANEY BRIARLEY.

A WEEK later Hilary Murdoch returned from the Broxton graveyard in a drizzling rain, and made his way to the bare, cleanly-swept chamber upstairs.

Since the night on which he had cried out to his mother that she must not enter, the table at which the dead man had been wont to sit at work had been pushed aside. Some one had thrown a white cloth over it. Murdoch went to it and drew this cloth away. He stood and looked down at the little skeleton of iron and steel; it had been nothing but a curse from first to last, and yet it fascinated him. He found it hard to do the thing he had come to do.

“It is not finished,” he said to the echoes of the empty room. “It—never will be.”

He slowly replaced it in its case, and buried it

out of sight at the bottom of the trunk, which, from that day forward, would stand unused and locked.

When he arose after doing this he unconsciously struck his hands together, as he had seen grave-diggers do when they brushed the damp soil away.

The first time Haworth saw his new hand he regarded him with small favour. In crossing the yard one day at noon, he came upon him disposing of his unceremonious mid-day meal and reading at the same time. He stopped to look at him.

“Who’s that?” he asked one of the men.

The fellow grinned in amiable appreciation of the rough tone of query.

“That’s th’ ’Merican,” he answered; “an’ a soft un he is.”

“What’s that he’s reading?”

“Summat about engineerin’, loike as not. That’s his crack.”

In the rush of his new plans and the hurry of the last few months, Haworth had had time to

forget the man who had wished him "good luck," and whose pathetic figure had been a shadow upon the first glow of his triumph. He did not connect him at all with the young fellow before him. He turned away with a shrug of his burly shoulders.

"He doesn't look like an Englishman," he said.  
"He hasn't got backbone enough."

Afterward, when the two accidentally came in contact, Haworth wasted few civil words. At times his domineering brusqueness excited Murdoch to wonder.

"He's a queer fellow, that Haworth," he said reflectively to Floxham. "Sometimes I think he's out of humour with me."

With the twelve-year-old daughter of one of the workmen, who used to bring her father's dinner, the young fellow had struck up something of a friendship. She was the eldest of twelve, a mature young person, whose business-like air had attracted him. She had assisted her mother in the rearing of her family from her third year, and had apparently done with the follies of youth.

She was stunted with much nursing, and her small face had a shrewd and careworn look. Murdoch's first advances she received with some distrust, but after a lapse of time they progressed fairly and, without any weak sentiment, were upon excellent terms.

One rainy day she came into the yard enveloped in a large shawl, evidently her mother's, and also evidently very much in her way. Her dinner-can, her beer-jug, and her shawl were more than she could manage.

"Eh! I *am* in a mess," she said to Hilary, stopping at the doorway with a long-drawn breath; "I dunnot know which way to turn—what wi' th' beer and what wi' th' dinner. I've gotten on mother's Sunday shawl as she had afore she wur wed, an' th' eends keep a draggin' an' a draggin', an' th' mud'll be th' ruin on 'em. Th' pin mother put in it is na big enow, an' it's gotten loose."

There was perhaps not much sense of humour in the young man. He did not seem to see the grotesqueness of the little figure with its mud-bedraggled maternal wrappings. He turned up

the lapel of his coat and examined it quite seriously.

"I've got a pin here that will hold it," he said. "I picked it up because it was such a large one."

Janey Briarley's eyes brightened.

"Eh!" she ejaculated, "that theer's a graidely big 'un. Some woman mun ha' dropped it out o' her shawl. Wheer did tha foind it?"

"In the street."

"I thowt so. Some woman's lost it. Dost tha think tha can pin it reet, or mun I put th' beer down an' do it mysen?"

He thought he could do it, and bent down to reach her level.

It was at this moment that Haworth approached the door with the intention of passing out. Things had gone wrong with him, and he was in one of his worst moods. He strode down the passage in a savage hurry, and, finding his way barred, made no effort to keep his temper.

"Get out of the road," he said, and pushed Murdoch aside with his foot.

It was as if he had dropped a spark of fire into

gunpowder. Murdoch sprang to his feet, white with wrath, and quivering.

“D—n you !” he shrieked, “d—n you !—I’ll kill you !” and he rushed upon him.

As he sprang upon him, Haworth staggered between the shock and his amazement. A sense of the true nature of the thing he had done broke in upon him.

When it was all over, he fell back a pace, and a grim surprise, not without its hint of satisfaction, was in his face.

“The devil take you,” he said. “You have got some blood in you, after all.”



## CHAPTER V.

## THE BEGINNING OF A FRIENDSHIP.

THE next morning, when he appeared at the Works, Murdoch found he had to make his way through a group of the "hands" which some sufficiently powerful motive had gathered together, — which group greeted his appearance with signs of interest. "Theer he is," he heard them say. And then a gentleman of leisure, who was an outsider and supported himself against the wall enjoying the solace of a short pipe, exerted himself to look round and add his comment.

"Well," he remarked, "he may ha' done it, an' I wunnot stick out as he did na; but if it wur na fur the circumstantyal evidence I would na ha' believed it."

Floxham met him at the entrance with a message :

"Haworth's sent fur thee," he said.

"Where is he?"—coolly enough under the circumstances.

The engineer chuckled in sly exultation.

"He's in the office. He didna say nowt about givin' thee th' bag; but tha may as well mak' up thy moind to it. Tha wert pretty cheeky, tha knows, considerin' he wur th' mester."

"Look here," with some heat; "do you mean to say you think I was in the wrong? Am I to let the fellow insult me and not resent it—touch me with his foot, as if I were a dog?"

"Tha'rt particular, my lad," dryly. "An' tha does na know as much o' th' mester koind as most folk." But the next instant he flung down the tool he held in his hand. "Dom thee!" he cried, "I loike thy pluck. Stick to it, lad—mesters or no mesters."

As Murdoch crossed the threshold of his room, Jem Haworth turned in his seat and greeted him with a short nod, not altogether combative. Then he leaned forward with his arms upon the table before him.

"Sit down," he said. "I'd like to take a look

at the chap who thought he could thrash Jem Haworth.”

But Murdoch did not obey him.

“I suppose you have something to say to me,” he said, “as you sent for me.”

He did not receive the answer he was prepared for. Jem Haworth burst into a loud laugh.

“By George! you’re a plucky chap,” he said, “if you are an American.”

Murdoch’s blood rose again.

“Say what you have to say,” he demanded. “I can guess what it is; but let me tell you, I should do the same thing again. It was no fault of mine that I was in your path——”

“If I’d been such a fool as not to see that,” put in Haworth, with a smile grimmer than before, “do you think I couldn’t have smashed every bone in your body?”

Then Murdoch comprehended how matters were to stand between them.

“Getten th’ bag?” asked Floxham, when he went back to his work.

“No.”

“Tha hannot?” with animation. “Well, dang *me!*”

At the close of the day, as they were preparing to leave their work, Haworth presented himself in the engine-room, looking perhaps a trifle awkward.

“See here,” he said to Murdoch, “I’ve heard something to-day as I’ve missed hearing before, somehow. The inventing chap was your father?”

“Yes.”

He stood in an uneasy attitude, looking out of the window as if he half expected to see the frail tall figure again.

“I saw him once, poor chap,” he said, “and he stuck to me somehow. I’d meant to stand by him if he’d come here. I’d have liked to do him a good turn.”

He turned to Murdoch suddenly, and with a hint of embarrassment in his off-hand air.

“Come up and have dinner with me,” he said. “It’s devilish dull spending a chap’s nights in a big place like mine. Come up with me now.”

The visit was scarcely to Murdoch’s taste, but it was easier to accept than to refuse. He had

seen the house often, and had felt some slight curiosity as to its inside appearance.

There was only one other house in Broxton which approached it in size and splendour, and this stood empty at present, its owner being abroad. Broxton itself was a sharp and dingy little town, whose inhabitants were mostly foundry hands. It had grown up around the Works and increased with them. It had a small railway station, two or three public-houses much patronized, and wore, somehow, an air of being utterly unconnected with the outside world, which much belied it. Motives of utility, a desire to be on the spot, and a general disregard for un-business-like attractions had led Haworth to build his house on the outskirts of the town.

"When I want a spree," he had said, "I can go to Manchester or London, and I'm not particular about the rest on it. I want to be nigh the place."

It was a big house and a handsome one. It was one of the expressions of the man's success, and his pride was involved in it. He spent money on it lavishly, and, having completed

it, went to live a desolate life among its grandeurs.

The inhabitants of the surrounding villages, which were simple and agricultural, regarded Broxton with frank distaste, and "Haworth's" with horror. Haworth's smoke polluted their atmosphere. Haworth's hands made weekly raids upon their towns and rendered themselves obnoxious in their streets. The owner of the Works, his mode of life, his defiance of opinion, and his coarse sins, were supposed to be tabooed subjects. The man was ignored, and left to his visitors from the larger towns,—visitors who occasionally presented themselves to be entertained at his house in a fashion of his own, and who were a greater scandal than all the rest.

"They hate me," said Haworth to his visitor, as they sat down to dinner; "they hate me, the devil take 'em. I'm not moral enough for 'em—not moral enough!" with a shout of laughter.

There was something unreal to his companion in the splendour with which the great fellow was surrounded. The table was covered with a kind of banquet; servants moved about noiselessly as

he talked and laughed; the appointments of the room were rich and in good taste.

"Oh! it's none of my work," he said, seeing Murdoch glance about him. "I wasn't fool enough to try to do it myself. I gave it into the hands of them as knew how."

He was loud-tongued and boastful; but he showed good-nature enough and a rough wit, and it was also plain that he knew his own strength and weaknesses.

"Thirty years your father was at work on that notion of his?" he said once during the evening.

Murdoch made an uneasy gesture of assent.

"And it never came to aught?"

"No."

"He died?"

"Yes."

He thrust his hands deep in his pockets, and gave the young fellow a keen look.

"Why don't you take the thing up yourself?" he said. "There may be something in it, after all, and you're a long-headed chap."

Murdoch started from his chair. He took an

excited turn across the room before he knew what he was doing.

"I never will," he said, "so help me God! The thing's done with and shut out of the world."

When he went away, Haworth accompanied him to the door. At the threshold he turned about.

"How do you like the look of things?" he demanded.

"I should be hard to please if I did not like the look of them," was the answer.

"Well, then, come again. You're welcome. I have it all to myself. I'm not favourite enow with the gentry to bring any on 'em here. You're free to come when th' fit takes you."

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## CHAPTER VI.

## MRS. FRENCH.

IT was considered, after this, a circumstance illustrative of Haworth's peculiarities that he had taken to himself a *protégé* from among the "hands;" that said *protégé* was an eccentric young fellow who was sometimes spoken of as being scarcely as bright as he should be; that he occasionally dined or supped with Haworth, that he spent numberless evenings with him, and that he read his books, which would not have been much used otherwise.

Murdoch lived his regular, unemotional life, in happy ignorance of these rumours. It was true that he gradually fell into the habit of going to Haworth's house, and also of reading his books. Indeed, if the truth were told, these had been his attraction.

"I've no use for 'em," said Haworth, candidly,

on showing him his library. "Get into 'em, if you've a fancy for 'em."

His fancy for them was strong enough to bring him to the place again and again. He found books he had wanted, but never hoped to possess. The library, it may be admitted, was not of Jem Haworth's selection, and indeed this gentleman's fancy for his new acquaintance was not a little increased by a certain shrewd admiration for an intellectual aptness which might be turned to practical account.

"You tackle 'em as if you were used to 'em," he used to say. "I'd give something solid myself if I could do the same. There's what's against me many a time—knowing nought of books and having to fight my way rough and ready."

From the outset of this acquaintance Murdoch's position at the Works had been an easier one. It became understood that Haworth would stand by him, and that he must be treated with a certain degree of respect. Greater latitude was given him and better pay, and though he remained in the engine-room, other and

more responsible work frequently fell into his hands.

He went on in the even tenor of his way, uncommunicative and odd as ever. He still presented himself ahead of time, and laboured with the unnecessary absorbed ardour of an enthusiast, greatly to the distaste of those less zealous.

“Tha gets into it as if tha wur doin’ fur thysen,” said one of these. “Happen”—feeling the sarcasm a strong one,—“happen tha’rt fond on it?”

“Oh yes,” unconsciously; “that’s it, I suppose. I’m fond of it.”

The scoffer bestowed upon him one thunder-struck glance, opened his mouth, shut it, and retired in disgust.

“Theer’s a chap,” he said, jerking his thumb over his shoulder on returning to his companions —“theer’s a chap as says he’s fond o’ work—*fond* on it!”—with dramatic scorn. “Blast his eyes! Fond on it!”

With Floxham he had always stood well, though even Floxham’s regard was tempered with

a slight private contempt for peculiarities not easily tolerated by the practical mind.

“Th’ chap’s gotten gumption enow i’ his way,” he said to Haworth. “If owt breaks down or gets out o’ gear, he’s aw theer ; but theer is na a lad on th’ place as could na cheat him o’ his eye-teeth.”

His reputation of being a “queer chap” was greatly increased by the simplicity and seclusion of his life. The house in which he lived with his mother had the atmosphere of a monastic cell. As she had devoted herself to her husband, the woman devoted herself to her son, watching him with a hungry eye. He was given to taking long stretches of walks, and appearing in distant villages, book in hand, and with apparently no ulterior object in view. His holidays were nearly all spent out-of-doors in such rambles as these. The country people began to know his tall figure and long stride, and to regard him with the friendly toleration of strength for weakness.

“They say i’ Broxton,” it was said among them, “as his feyther deed daft, and it’s no wonder th’

young chap's gotten queer ways. He's good-natured enow, though i' a simple road."

His good-nature manifested itself in more than one way which called forth comment. To his early friendship for Janey he remained faithful. The child interested him, and the sentiment developed as it grew older.

It was quite natural that, after a few months' acquaintance, he should drop in at the household of her parents on Saturday afternoon, as he was passing. It was the week's half-holiday and a fine day, and he had nothing else to do. These facts, in connection with that of the Briarleys' cottage presenting itself, were reasons enough for going in.

It occurred to him as he entered the narrow strip of garden before the door, that the children of the neighbourhood must have congregated to hold high carnival. Groups made dirt-pies; clusters played "bobber and kibbs;" select parties settled differences of opinions with warmth of feeling and elevation of voice; a youth of tender years, in corduroys which shone with friction, stood upon his head in one corner, calmly but not

haughtily presenting to the blue vault of heaven a pair of ponderous brass-finished clogs.

"What dost want?" he demanded, without altering his position. "Th' missis isn't in."

"I'm going in to see Janey," explained Murdoch.

He found the little kitchen shining with the Saturday "cleaning up." The flagged floor as glaringly spotless as pipeclay and sandstone could make it, the brass oven-handles and tin pans in a condition to put an intruder out of countenance, the fire replenished, and Janey sitting on a stool on the hearth enveloped in an apron of her mother's, and reading laboriously aloud.

"Eh! dear me!" she exclaimed. "It's yo'—an' I am na fit to be seen. I wur settin' down to rest a bit. I've been doin' th' cleanin' aw day, an' I wur real done fur."

"Never mind that," said Murdoch. "That's all right enough."

He cast about him for a safe position to take—one in which he could stretch his legs and avoid damaging the embarrassing purity of the floor. Finally he settled upon a small print-covered sofa,

and balanced himself carefully upon its extreme edge and the backs of his heels, notwithstanding Janey's civil protestations.

"Dunnot yo' moind th' floor," she said. "Yo' needn't. Set yo' down comfortable."

"Oh, I'm all right," answered Murdoch, with calm good cheer. "This is comfortable enough. What's that you were reading?"

Janey settled down upon her stool with a sigh at once significant of relief and a readiness to indulge in friendly confidence.

"It's a book I gotten fro' th' Broxton Chapel Sunday Skoo'. It's th' Mem—m-e-m-o-i-r-s——"

"Memoirs," responded Murdoch.

"Memoyers of Mary Ann Gibbs."

Unfortunately her visitor was not thoroughly posted on the subject of the Broxton Chapel literature. He cast about him mentally, but with small success.

"I don't seem to have heard of it before," was the conclusion he arrived at.

"Hannot yo'? Well, it's a noice book, an' theer's lots more like it in th' skoo' libery—aw about Sunday skoo' scholars as has consumption

an' th' loike an' reads th' boible to foalk an' dees. They aw on 'em dee."

"Oh," doubtfully, but still with respect. "It's not very cheerful, is it?"

Janey shook her head with an expression of mature resignation.

"Eh no! they're none on 'em cheerful—but they're noice to read. This here un now—she had th' asthma an' summat wrong wi' her legs, an' she knowed aw th' boible through aside o' th' hymn-book, an' she'd sing aw th' toime when she could breathe fur th' asthma, an' tell foak as if they did na go an' do likewise they'd go to burnin' hell wheer th' fire is na quenched an' th' worms dyeth not."

"It can't have been very pleasant for the friends," was her companion's comment. But there was nothing jocose about his manner. He was balancing himself seriously on the edge of the hard little sofa and regarding her with speculative interest.

"Where's your mother?" he asked next.

"Hoo's gone to th' chapel," was the answer. "Theer's a mothers' meetin' in th' vcestry, an'



hoo's gone theer an' takken th' babby wi' her. Th' rest o' th' childer is playin' out at th' front."

He glanced out of the door.

"Those—those are not all yours?" he said, thunderstruck.

"Aye, they are—they. Eh!" drawing a long breath, "but is na theer a lot on 'em? Theer's eleven, an' I've nussed 'em nigh ivvery one."

He turned toward the door again.

"There seems to be a great many of them," he remarked. "You must have had a great deal to do."

"That I ha'. I've wished mony a toime I'd been a rich lady. Theer's that daughter o' Ffrench's now. Eh! I'd loike to ha' bin her."

"I never heard of her before," he answered. "Who is she, and why do you choose her?"

"Cos she's so hansum. She's that theer grand she looks loike she thowt ivverybody else wur dirt. I've seen women as wur bigger, an' wore more cloas at onct, but I nivver seed none as grand as she is. I nivver seed her but onct. She coom here wi' her feyther fur two or three week' afore he went to furrin parts, an' she wur

caught i' th' rain one day an' stopped in here a bit. She dropped her hankcher an' mother's gotten it yet. It's nigh aw lace. Would yo' loike to see it?" hospitably.

"Yes," feeling his lack of enthusiasm something of a fault. "I—dare say I should."

From the depths of a drawer, which she opened with a vigorous effort and some skill in retaining her balance, she produced something pinned up in a fragment of old linen. This she bore to her guest, and unpinning it, displayed the handkerchief.

"Tha can tak' it in thy hond an' smell it," she said graciously. "It's gotten scent on it."

Murdoch took it in his hand, scarce knowing what else to do. He knew nothing of women and their finery. He regarded the fragrant bit of lace and cambric seriously, and read in one corner the name "Rachel Ffrench," written in delicate letters. Then he returned it to Janey.

"Thank you," he said, "it is very nice."

Janey bore it back perhaps with some slight inward misgivings as to the warmth of its reception, but also with a tempering recollection of

the ways of "men-foak." When she came back to her stool, she changed the subject.

"We've bin havin' trouble lately," she said.  
"Eh! but I've seed a lot o' trouble i' my day."

"What is the trouble now?" Murdoch asked.

"Feyther. It's allus him. He's gotten in wi' a bad lot an' he's drinkin' agen. Seems loike neyther mother nor me can keep him straight fur aw we told him Haworth'll turn him off. Haworth's not goin' to stand his drink an' th' lot he goes wi'. I would na stand it mysen."

"What lot does he go with?"

"Eh!" impatiently, "a lot o' foo's as stands round th' publics an' grumbles at th' mesters an' th' wages they get. An' feyther's one o' these soft uns as believes aw they hears, an' has na gotten gumption to think fur hissen. I've looked after him ivver sin' I wur three."

She became even garrulous in her lack of patience, and was in full flow when her mother entered returning from the chapel, with a fagged face, and a large baby on her hip.

"Here, tak' him, Jane Ann," she said; "but tak' off thy apron furst, or tha'lt tumble ower it

an' dirty his clean bishop wi' th' muck tha's gotten on it. Eh! I *am* tired. Who's this here?" signifying Murdoch.

"It's Mester Murdoch," said Janey, dropping the apron and taking the child, who made her look top-heavy. "Sit thee down, mother. Yo' needn't moind him. He's a workin' mon hissen."

When Murdoch took his departure, both accompanied him to the door.

"Coom in sometime when th' mester's here," said Mrs. Briarley. "Happen yo' could keep him in a neet, an' that ud be summat."

Half way up the lane he met Haworth in his gig, when he stopped.

"Wheer hast tha been?" he asked, dropping into dialect, as he was prone to do.

"To Briarley's cottage, talking to the little girl."

Haworth stared at him a moment, and then burst into a laugh.

"Tha'rt a queer chap," he said. "I can no more than half make thee out. If thy head was not so level, I should think tha wert a bit soft."

"I don't see why," answered Murdoch, undis-

turbed. "The child interests me. I am not a Lancashire man, remember, and she is a new species."

"Get in," said Haworth, making room for him on the seat.

Murdoch got in, and as they drove on it occurred to him to ask a question.

"Who's Ffrench?"

"Ffrench?" said Haworth. "Oh, Ffrench is one o' th' nobs here. He's a chap with a fancy for being a gentleman-manufacturer. He's spent his brass on his notions, until he has been obliged to draw in his horns a bit. He's never lived much in Broxton, though he's got a pretty big place here. The Continent's the style for him; but he'll turn up here again some day when he's hard up enow. There's his place now."

And as he spoke they drove sharply by a house standing closed among the trees, and having an air of desolateness, in spite of the sunlight.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE "WHO'D HA' THOWT IT?"

"It's th' queerest thing i' th' world," said Mrs. Briarley to her neighbours, in speaking of her visitor,—“It's th' queerest thing i' th' world as he should be a workin' mon. I should ha' thowt he'd ha' wanted to get behind th' counter i' a draper's shop or summat genteel. He'd be a well-lookin' young chap i' a shiny cloth coat an' wi' a blue necktie on. Seems loike he does na think enow o' hissen. He'll coom to our house an' set down an' listen to our Janey talkin', an' tell her things out o' books, as simple as if he thowt it wur nowt but what ony chap could do. Theer's wheer he's a bit soft. He knows nowt o' settin' hissen up.”

From Mrs. Briarley Murdoch heard numberless stories of Haworth, presenting him in a somewhat startling light.

"Eh, but he's a rare un, is Haworth," said the good woman. "He does na care fur mon nor devil. Th' carryin's on as he has up at th' big house ud mak' a decent body's hair stond o' eend. Afore he built th' house, he used to go to Lunnon an' Manchester fur his sprees; but he has 'em here now, an' theer's drink an' riotin' an' finery an' foak, as owt to be shamt o' theirsens. I wonder he is na feart to stay in th' place alone after they're gone."

But for one reason or another the house was quiet enough for the first six months of Murdoch's acquaintance with its master. Haworth gave himself up to the management of the Works. He perfected plans he had laid at a time when the power had not been in his own hands. He kept his eye on his own interests sharply. The most confirmed shirkers in the place found themselves obliged to fall to work, however reluctantly. His bold strokes of business enterprise began to give him wide reputation. In the lapse of its first half-year, "Haworth's" gained for itself a name.

At the end of this time, Murdoch arrived at

the Works one morning to find a general tone of conviviality reigning. A devil-may-care air showed itself among all the graceless. There was a hint of demoralization in the very atmosphere.

"Where's Haworth?" he asked Floxham, who did not seem to share the general hilarity. "I've not seen him."

"No," was the engineer's answer; "nor tha will na see him yet a bit. A lot o' foo's coom fro' Lunnon last neet. He's on one o' his speers, an' a noice doment they'll ha' on it afore they're done!"

The next morning Haworth dashed down to the Works early in his gig, and spent a short time in his room. Before he left he went to the engine-room and spoke to Murdoch.

"Is there aught you want from the house—aught in the way o' books, I mean?" he said, with a touch of rough bravado in his manner.

"No," Murdoch answered.

"All right," he returned. "Then keep away, lad, for a day or two."

During the "day or two," Broxton existed in



a state of ferment. Gradually an air of disreputable festivity began to manifest itself among all those whose virtue was assailable. There were open “sprees” among those, and their wives, with the inevitable baby in their arms, stood upon their door-steps bewailing their fate, and retailing gossip with no slight zest.

“Silks an’ satins, bless yo’,” they said. “An’ paint an’ feathers; th’ brazent things. I wonder they are na shamt to show their faces! A noice mester Haworth is to ha’ men under him.”

Having occasion to go out late one evening, Murdoch encountered Janey, clad in the big bonnet and shawl, and hurrying along the street.

“Wheer am I goin’?” she echoed sharply, in reply to his query. “Why, I’m goin’ round to th’ publicks to look fur feyther—*theer’s* wheer I’m goin’. I hannot seed him sin’ dayleet this mornin’; an’ he’s gotten th’ rent an’ th’ buryin’-club money wi’ him.”

“I’ll go with you,” said Murdoch.

He went with her, making the round of half the public-houses in the village, finally ending at a jovial establishment bearing upon its whitened

window the ambiguous title, "WHO'D HA' THOWT IT?"

There was a sound of argument accompanied by a fiddle, and an odour of beer supplemented by tobacco. Janey pushed open the door and made her way in, followed by her companion.

An uncleanly, loud-voiced fellow stood unsteadily at a table, flourishing a clay-pipe and making a speech.

"Th' workin' mon," he said. "There's too much talk o' th' workin' mon. Is na it bad enow to *be* a workin' mon, wi'out havin' th' gentry remindin' yo' on it fro' year eend to year eend? Le's ha' less jaw-work an' more paw-work fro' th' gentry. Le's ha' fewer loiberys an' athyneums, an' more wage—an' holidays—an'—an' beer. Le's *progress*—tha's wha' I say—an' I'm a workin mon."

"Ee-er—ee-er!" cried the chorus.

"Ee—er!"

In the midst of the pause following these acclamations, a voice broke in suddenly with startling loudness—"Ee-er! ee-er!" it said.

It was Mr. Briarley, who had unexpectedly

awakened from a beery nap, and, though much surprised to find out where he was, felt called upon to express his approbation.

Janey hitched her shawl into a manageable length and approached him.

"Tha'rt here?" she said. "I knowed tha would be! Tha'lt worrit th' loife out on us afore tha'rt done. Coom on home wi' me afore tha'rt spent ivvery ha'penny we've gotten."

Mr. Briarley roused himself so far as to smile at her blandly.

"It's Zhaney," he said, "it's Zhaney. Don' intrup th' meetin', Zhaney. I'll be home dreckly. Mus' na intrup th' workin' mon. He's th' backbone 'n' sinoo o' th' country. Le's ha' a sup more beer."

Murdoch bent over and touched his shoulder.

"You had better come home," he said.

The man looked round at him blankly, but the next moment an exaggerated expression of enlightenment showed itself on his face.

"Iss th' 'Merican," he said. "Iss Murdoch." And then, with sudden bibulous delight: "Gi' us a speech 'bout 'Merica."

In a moment there was a clamour all over the room. The last words had been spoken loudly enough to be heard, and the idea presented itself to the members of the assembly as a happy one.

"Ay," they cried. "Le's ha' a speech fro' th' 'Merican. Le's hear summat fro' 'Merica. Theer's wheer th' laborin' mon has his dues."

Murdoch turned about and faced the company.

"You all know enough of me to know whether I am a speech-making man or not," he said. "I have nothing to say about America, and if I had I should not say it here. You are not doing yourselves any good. The least fellow among you has brains enough to tell him that."

There was at once a new clamour—this time one of dissatisfaction. The speech-maker with the long clay, who was plainly the leader, expressed himself with heat and scorn.

"He's a noice chap—he is," he cried. "He'll ha' nowt to do wi' us. He's th' soart o' workin' mon to ha' aboot, to play th' pianny an' do paintin' i' velvet. 'Merica be danged! He's more o' th' gentry koind to-day than Haworth.

Haworth *does* tak’ a decent spree now an’ then ; but this heer un—— Ax him to tak’ a glass o’ beer an’ see what he’ll say.”

Disgust was written upon every countenance, but no one proffered the hospitality mentioned. Mr. Briarley had fallen asleep again, murmuring suggestively, “Ay, le’s hear summat fro’ ’Merica. Le’s *go* to ’Merica. Pu-r on thy bonnet, lass, pur—it on.”

With her companion’s assistance, Janey got him out of the place and led him home.

“Haaf th’ rent’s gone,” she said, when she turned out his pockets, as he sat by the fire. “An’ wheer’s th’ buryin’ money to coom fro’?”

Mr. Briarley shook his head mournfully.

“Th’ buryin’ money,” he said. “Ay, i’deed. A noice thing it is fur a poor chap to ha’ to cut off his beer to pay fur his coffin by th’ week. Wastin’ good brass on summat he may nivver need as long as he lives. I dunnot loike th’ thowt on it, eyther. It’s bad enow to ha’ to get into th’ thing at th’ eend, wi’out ha’in’ it lugged up at th’ door ivvery Saturday, an’ payin’ for th’ ornymentin’ on it by inches.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

## MR. FFRENCH.

It was a week before affairs assumed their accustomed aspect. Not that the Works had been neglected, however. Each morning Hawth had driven down early and spent an hour in his office and about the place, reading letters, issuing orders, and keeping a keen look-out generally.

"I'll have no spreeing here among *you* chaps," he announced. "Spree as much as you like when th' work's done, but you don't spree in *my* time. Look sharp after 'em, Kendal."

The day after his guests left him he appeared at his usual time, and sent at once for Murdoch.

On his arriving he greeted him, leaning back in his chair, his hands thrust into his pockets.

"Well, lad," he said, "it's over."

Almost unconsciously, Murdoch thrust his

hands into *his* pockets also, but the action had rather a reflective than a defiant expression.

“It’s lasted a pretty long time, hasn’t it?” he remarked.

Haworth answered him with a laugh.

“Egad! You take it cool enough,” he said.

Suddenly he got up and began to walk about, his air a mixture of excitement and braggadocio. After a turn or two he wheeled about.

“Why don’t you say summat?” he demanded, sardonically. “Summat moral. You don’t mean to tell me you’ve not got pluck enow?”

“I don’t see,” said Murdoch, deliberately,—“I don’t see that there’s anything to say. Do you?”

The man stared at him, reddening. Then he turned about and flung himself into his chair again.

“No,” he answered. “By George! I don’t.”

They discussed the matter no further. It seemed to dispose of itself. Their acquaintance went on in the old way, but there were moments afterward when Murdoch felt that the man regarded him with something that might have

been restrained or secret fear — a something which held him back and made him silent or unready of speech. Once, in the midst of a conversation taking a more confidential tone than usual, to his companion's astonishment he stopped and spoke bluntly :

“ If I say aught as goes against the grain with you,” he said, “ speak up, lad. Blast it !” striking his fist hard against his palm, “ I'd like to show my clean side to you.”

It was at this time that he spoke first of his mother.

“ When I ran away from the poor-house,” he said, “ I left her there. She's a soft-hearted body — a good one too. As soon as I earned my first fifteen shillin' a week, I gave her a house of her own—and I lived hard to do it. She lives like a lady now, though she's as simple as ever. She knows naught of the world, and she knows naught of me beyond what she sees of me when I go down to the little country place in Kent, with a new silk gown and a lace cap for her. She scarce ever wears 'em, but she's as fond on 'em as if she got 'em from Buckingham Palace.



She thinks I'm a lad yet, and say my prayers every night and the Catechism on Sundays. She'll never know aught else, if I can help it. That's why I keep her where she is."

When he had said that he intended to make "Haworth's" second to no place in England, he had not spoken idly. His pride in the place was a passion. He spent money lavishly but shrewdly; he paid his men well, but ruled them with an iron hand. Those of his fellow-manufacturers who were less bold and also less keen-sighted regarded him with no small disfavour.

"He'll have trouble yet, that Haworth fellow," they said.

But "Haworth's" flourished and grew. The original Works were added to, and new hands being called for, flocked into Broxton with their families. It was Jem Haworth who built the rows of cottages to hold them, and he built them well and substantially, but as a sharp business investment and a matter of pride rather than from any weakness of regarding them from a moral standpoint.

"I'll have no poor jobs done on my place," he announced. "I'll leave that to the gentleman manufacturers."

It was while in the midst of this work that he received a letter from Gerard Ffrench, who was still abroad.

Going into his room one day Murdoch found him reading it and looking excited.

"Here's a chap as would be the chap for me," he said, "if brass were iron — that chap Ffrench."

"What does he want?" Murdoch asked.

"Naught much," grimly. "He's got a notion of coming back here, and he'd like to go into partnership with me. That's what he's drivin' at. He'd like to be a partner with Jem Haworth."

"What has he to offer?"

"Cheek, and plenty on it. He says his name's well known, and he's got influence as well as practical knowledge. I'd like to have a bit of a talk with him."

Suddenly he struck his fist on the table before him.

"I've got a name that's enow for me," he said.  
"The day's to come yet when I ask any chap for  
name or money or aught else. Partner be  
damned! This here's 'Haworth's!'"

## CHAPTER IX.

## "NOT FOR ONE HOUR."

THE meetings of the malcontents continued to be held at the "Who'd ha' thowt it?" and were loud-voiced and frequent, but, notwithstanding their frequency and noisiness, resulted principally in a disproportionate consumption of beer and tobacco and some differences of opinion, decided in a gentlemanly manner with the assistance of "backers" and a ring.

Having been rescued from these surroundings by Murdoch on several convivial occasions, Briarley began to anticipate his appearance with resignation if not cheerfulness, and to make preparations accordingly.

"I mun lay a sup in reet at th' start," he would say. "There's no knowin' how soon he'll turn up if he drops in to see th' women. Gi' me a glass afore these chaps, Mary. They con wait a bit."

"Why does tha stand it, tha foo'?" some independent spirit would comment. "Con th' chap *carry* thee whoam if tha does na want to go?"

But Briarley never rebelled. Resistance was not his forte. If it were possible to become comfortably drunk before he was sought out and led away he felt it a matter for mild self-gratulation, but he bore defeat amiably.

"Th' missis wants me," he would say unsteadily, but with beaming countenance, on catching sight of Murdoch or Janey. "Th' missis has sent to ax me to go an'—an' set wi' her a bit. I mun go, chaps. A man munna negleck his fam'ly."

In response to Mrs. Briarley's ratings and Janey's querulous appeals, it was his habit to shed tears copiously and with a touch of ostentation.

"I'm a poor chap, missus," he would say. "I'm a poor chap. Yo' munnot be hard on me. I nivver wur good enow fur a woman loike yoursen. I should na wonder if I had to join th' teetotals after aw. Tha knows it allus rains o' Whit-Saturday, when they ha' their walk, an' that

theer looks as if th' Almoighty wur on th' teetotal soide. It's noan loike He'd go to so mich trouble if He were na."

At such crises as these "th' women foak," as he called his wife and Janey, derived their greatest consolation from much going to chapel.

"If it wur na fur th' bit o' comfort I get theer," said the poor woman, "I should na know whether I wur standin' on my head or my heels—betwixt him, an' th' work, an' th' childer."

"Happen ye'd loike to go wi' us," said Janey, on one occasion. "Yo'll be sure to hear a good sermont."

Murdoch went with them, and sat in a corner of their free seat—a hard seat, with a straight and unrelenting back. But he was not prevented by the seat from being interested and even absorbed by the doctrine. He had an absent-minded way of absorbing impressions, and the unemotional tenor of his life had left him singularly impartial. He did not finally decide that the sermon was good, bad, or indifferent, but he pondered it and its probable effects deeply, and with no little curiosity. It was a long sermon, and one which

“hit straight from the shoulder.” It displayed a florid heaven and a burning hell. It was literal, and well garnished with telling and scriptural quotations. Once or twice during its delivery Murdoch glanced at Janey and Mrs. Briarley. The woman, during intervals of eager pacifying of the big baby, lifted her pale face and listened devoutly. Janey sat respectable and rigorous, her eyes fixed upon the pulpit, her huge shawl folded about her, her bonnet slipping backwards at intervals and requiring to be repeatedly rearranged by a smart hustling somewhere in the region of the crown.

The night was very quiet when they came out into the open air. The smoke-clouds of the day had been driven away by a light breeze, and the sky was bright with stars. Mrs. Briarley and the ubiquitous baby joined a neighbour and hastened home, but Murdoch and Janey lingered a little.

“My father is buried here,” Murdoch had said, and Janey had answered with sharp curiosity.

“Wheer’s th’ place? I’d loike to see it. Has tha gotten a big head-stone up?”

She was somewhat disappointed to find there was none, and that nothing but the sod covered the long mound, but she appeared to comprehend the state of affairs at once.

"I s'pose tha'lt ha' one after a bit," she said, "when tha'rt not so short as th' art now. Ivvery body's short i' these toimes."

She seated herself upon the stone coping of the next grave, her elbow on her knee, a small, weird figure in the uncertain light.

"I allus did loike a big head-stone," she remarked, reflectively. "Theer's summat noice about a big white un wi' black letters on it. I loike a white un th' best, an' ha' th' letters cut deep, an' th' name big, an' a bit o' poetry at th' eend :

"'Stranger, a moment linger near,  
And hark to th' one as moulders here ;  
Thy bones, loike mine, shall rot i' th' ground,  
Until th' last awful trumpet's sound ;  
Thy flesh, loike mine, fa' to decay,  
For mon is made to pass away.'

Summat loike that. But yo' see it ud be loike to cost so much. What wi' th' stone an' paint an'



cuttin', I should na wonder if it would na coom to th' matter o' two pound,—an' then theer's th' funeral."

She ended with a sigh, and sank for a moment into a depressed reverie, but in the course of a few moments she roused herself again.

"Tell me summat about thy feyther," she demanded.

Murdoch bent down and plucked a blade of grass with a rather uncertain grasp.

"There isn't much to tell," he answered. "He was unfortunate, and had a hard life—and died."

Janey looked at his lowered face with a sharp, unchildish twinkle in her eye.

"Would tha moind me axin' thee summat?" she said.

"No."

But she hesitated a little before she put the question.

"Is it—wur it true—as he wur na aw theer—as he wur a bit—a bit soft i' th' yed?"

"No, that is not true."

"I'm glad it is na," she responded. "Art tha loike him?"

"I don't know."

"I hope tha art na, if he did na ha' luck. Theer's a great deal i' luck." Then, with a quick change of subject,—“How did tha loike th' sermont?”

"I am not sure," he answered, "that I know that either. How did you like it yourself?"

"Ay," with an air of elderly approval, "it wur a good un. Mester Hixon allus gi'es us a good un. He owts wi' what he's gotten to say. I loike a preacher as owts wi' it."

A few moments later, when they rose to go home, her mind seemed suddenly to revert to a former train of thought.

"Wur theer money i' that thing thy feyther wur tryin' at?" she asked.

"Not for him, it seemed."

"Ay; but theer mought be fur thee. Thee mayst ha' more in thee than he had, an' mought mak' summat on it. I'd nivver let owt go as had money i' it. Tha'dst mak' a better rich mon than Haworth."

After leaving her Murdoch did not go home. He turned his back upon the village again, and

walked rapidly away from it, out on the country road and across field paths, and did not turn until he was miles from Broxton.

Of late he had been more than usually abstracted. He had been restless, and at times nervously unstrung. He had slept ill, and spent his days in a half-conscious mood. More than once, as they worked together, Floxham had spoken to him amazed.

"What's up wi' thee, lad?" he had said. "Art dazed, or has tha takken a turn an' been on a spree?"

One night, when they were together, Haworth had picked up from the floor a rough but intricate-looking drawing, and, on handing it to him, had been bewildered by his sudden change of expression.

"Is it aught of yours?" he had asked.

"Yes," the young fellow had answered; "it's mine."

But, instead of replacing it in his pocket, he had torn it slowly into strips, and thrown it, piece by piece, into the fire, watching it as it burned.

It was not Janey's eminently practical observations which had stirred him to-night. He had been drifting toward this feverish crisis of feeling for months, and had contested its approach inch by inch. There were hours when he was overpowered by the force of what he battled against, and this was one of them.

It was nearly midnight when he returned, and his mother met him at the door with an anxious look. It was a look he had seen upon her face all his life; but its effect upon himself had never lessened from the day he had first recognised it, as a child.

"I did not think you would wait for me," he said. "It is later than I thought."

"I am not tired," she answered.

She had aged a little since her husband's death, but otherwise she had not changed. She looked up at her son just as she had looked at his father,—watchfully, but saying little.

"Are you going to bed?" she asked.

"I am going up-stairs," he replied. But he did not say that he was going to bed.

He bade her good-night shortly afterward, and went to his room. It was the one his father had used before his death, and the trunk containing his belongings stood in one corner of it.

For a short time after entering the room he paced the floor restlessly and irregularly. Sometimes he walked quickly, sometimes slowly; once or twice he stopped short, checking himself as he veered toward the corner in which the unused trunk stood.

"I'm in a queer humour," he said aloud. "I am thinking of it as if—as if it were a temptation to sin. Why should I?"

He made a sudden resolute movement forward. He knelt down, and, turning the key in the lock, flung the trunk-lid backward.

There was only one thing he wanted, and he knew where to find it. It lay buried at the bottom, under the unused garments, which gave forth a faint, damp odour as he moved them. When he rose from his knees he held the wooden case in his hand. After he had carried it to the table and opened it, and the model stood again

before him, he sat down and stared at it with a numb sense of fascination.

"I thought I had seen the last of it," he said ;  
"and here it is."

Even as he spoke he felt his blood warm within him, and flush his cheek. His hand trembled as he put it forth to touch and move the frame-work before him. He felt as if it were a living creature. His eye kindled, and he bent forward.

"There's something to be done with it yet," he said. "It's *not* a blunder, I'll swear !"

He was hot with eagerness and excitement. The thing had haunted him day and night for weeks. He had struggled to shake off its influence, but in vain. He had told himself that the temptation to go back to it and ponder over it was the working of a morbid taint in his blood. He had remembered the curse it had been, and had tried to think of that only ; but it had come back to him again and again, and—here it was.

He spent an hour over it, and in the end his passionate eagerness had rather grown than diminished. He put his hand up to his forehead

and brushed away drops of moisture ; his throat was dry, and his eyes were strained.

“ There’s something to be brought out of it yet,” he said, as he had said before. “ It *can* be done, I swear ! ”

The words had scarcely left his lips before he heard behind him a low, but sharp cry — a miserable ejaculation, half uttered.

He had not heard the door open, nor the entering footsteps ; but he knew what the cry meant the moment he heard it. He turned about and saw his mother standing on the threshold. If he had been detected in the commission of a crime, he could not have felt a sharper pang than he did. He almost staggered against the wall and did not utter a word. For a moment they looked at each other in a dead silence. Each wore in the eyes of the other a new aspect. She pointed to the model.

“ It has come back,” she said. “ I knew it would.”

The young fellow turned and looked at it a little stupidly.

“ I—didn’t mean to hurt you with the sight

of it," he said. "I took it out because — because——"

She stopped him with a movement of her head.

"Yes, I know," she said. "You took it out because it has haunted you and tempted you. You could not withstand it. It is in your blood."

He had known her through all his life a patient creature, whose very pains had bent themselves and held themselves in check, lest they should seem for an hour to stand in the way of the end to be accomplished. That she had, even in the deepest secrecy, rebelled against fate, he had never dreamed.

She came to the table and struck the model aside with one angry blow.

"Shall I tell you the truth?" she cried, panting. "*I have never believed in it for an hour—not for one hour!*"

He could only stammer out a few halting words.

"This is all new to me," he said. "I did not know——"

"No, you did not know," she answered. "How



should you, when I lived my whole life to hide it? I have been stronger than you thought. I bore with him, as I should have borne with him if he had been maimed or blind—or worse than that. I did not hurt him—he had hurt enough. I knew what the end would be. He would have been a happy man and I a happy woman, if it had not been for *that*, and there it is again. I tell you," passionately, "there is a curse on it!"

"And you think," he said, "that it has fallen upon me."

She burst into wild tears.

"I have told myself it would," she said. "I have tried to prepare myself for its coming some day; but I did not think it would show itself so soon as this."

"I don't know why," he said slowly. "I don't know—what there is in *me* that I should think I might do what he left undone. There seems a kind of vanity in it."

"It is not vanity," she said; "it is worse. It is what has grown out of my misery and his. I tell you it is in your blood."

A flush rose to his face, and a stubborn look settled upon him.

"Perhaps it is," he answered. "I have told myself that too."

She held her closed hand upon her heart, as if to crush down its passionate heavings.

"Begin as he began," she cried, "and the end will come to you as it came to him. Give it up now—now!"

"Give it up!" he repeated after her.

"Give it up," she answered, "or give up your whole life, your youth, your hope,—all that belongs to it."

She held out her hands to him in a wild, unconsciously theatrical gesture. The whole scene had been theatrical through its very incongruousness, and Murdoch had seen this vaguely, and been more shaken by it than anything else.

Before she knew what he meant to do, he approached the table, and replaced the model in its box, the touch of stubborn desperateness on him yet. He carried the case back to the trunk, and shut it in once more.

“I’ll let it rest a while,” he said ; “I’ll promise you that. If it is ever to be finished by me, the time will come when it will see the light again, in spite of us both.”

## CHAPTER X.

## CHRISTIAN MURDOCH.

As he was turning into the gate of the Works the next morning, a little lad touched him upon the elbow.

"Mester," he said, "sithee, Mester,—stop a bit."

He was out of breath, as if he had been running, and he held in his hand a slip of paper.

"I thowt I should na ketch thee," he said, "tha'rt so long-legged. A woman sent thee that," and he gave him the slip of paper.

Murdoch opened and read the words written upon it.

"If you are Steven Murdoch's son, I must see you. Come with the child."

There was no signature—only these words, written irregularly and weakly. He had never

met with an adventure in his life, and this was like an episode in a romance.

"If you are Steven Murdoch's son, I must see you."

He could scarcely realise that he was standing in the narrow, up-hill street, jostled by the hands shouting and laughing as they streamed past him through the gates to their work.

And yet, somehow he found himself taking it more coolly than seemed exactly natural. This morning, emotion and event appeared less startling than they would have done even the day before. The strange scene of the past night had, in a manner, prepared him for anything which might happen.

"Who sent it?" he asked of the boy.

"Th' woman as lodges i' our house. She's been theer three days, an' she's gotten to th' last mother says. Con tha coom? She's promist me a shillin' if I browt thee."

"Wait here a minute," said Murdoch.

He passed into the Works and went to Floxham.

"I've had a message that calls me away," he said. "If you can spare me for an hour——"

"I'll mak' out," said the engineer.

The lad at the gate looked up with an encouraging grin when he saw his charge returning.

"I'd loike to mak' th' shillin'," he said.

Murdoch followed him in silence. He was thinking of what was going to happen to himself scarcely as much as of the dead man in whose name he was called upon. He was brought near to him again as if it were by a fate. "If you are Steven Murdoch's son," had moved him strongly.

Their destination was soon reached. It was a house in a narrow but respectable street occupied chiefly by a decent class of workmen and their families. A week before he had seen in the window of this same house a card bearing the legend "Lodgings to Let," and now it was gone. A clean, motherly woman opened the door for them.

"Tha'st earnt tha shillin', has tha, tha young nowt?" she said to the lad with friendly severity. "Coom in, Mester. I wur feart he'd get off on some of his marlocks, an' forget aw about th' paper. She's i' a bad way, poor lady, an' th' lass is na o' much use. Coom upstairs."

She led the way to the second floor, and her knock being answered by a voice inside, she opened the door. The room was comfortable and of good size, a fire burned in the grate, and before it sat a girl with her hands clasped upon her knee.

She was a girl of nineteen, dark of face and slight of figure to thinness. When she turned her head slowly to look at him, Murdoch was struck at once with the peculiar steadiness of her large black eyes.

"She is asleep," she said in a low, cold voice.

There was a sound as of movement in the bed.

"I am awake," some one said. "If it is Steven Murdoch's son, let him come here."

Murdoch went to the bedside and stood looking down at the woman, who returned his gaze. She was a woman whose last hours upon earth were passing rapidly. Her beauty was now only something terrible to see; her breath came fast and short; her eyes met his with a look of anguish.

"Send the girl away," she said to him.

Low as her voice was, the girl heard it. She

rose without turning to right or left and went out of the room.

Until the door closed the woman still lay looking up into her visitor's face, but as soon as it was shut she spoke laboriously.

"What is your name?" she asked.

He told her.

"You are like your father," she said, and then closed her eyes and lay so for a moment. "It is a mad thing I am doing," she said, knitting her brows with weak fretfulness, and still lying with closed eyes. "I—I do not know—why I should have done it—only that it is the last thing. It is not that I am fond of the girl—or that she is fond of me." She opened her eyes with a start. "Is the door shut?" she said. "Keep her out of the room."

"She is not here," he answered, "and the door is closed."

The sight of his face seemed to help her to recover herself.

"What am I saying?" she said. "I have not told you who I am."

"No," he replied, "not yet."



"My name was Janet Murdoch," she said. "I was your father's cousin. Once he was very fond of me."

She drew from under her pillow a few old letters.

"Look at them," she said; "he wrote them."

But he only glanced at the superscription and laid them down again.

"I did not know," she panted, "that he was dead. I hoped he would be here. I knew that he must have lived a quiet life. I always thought of him as living here in the old way."

"He was away from here for thirty years," said Murdoch. "He only came back to die."

"He!" she said. "I never thought of that. It—seems very strange. I could not imagine his going from place to place—or living a busy life—or suffering much. He was so simple and so quiet. I thought of him," she went on, "because he was a good man—a good man—and there was no one else in the world. As the end came I grew restless—I wanted to—to try——"

But there her eyes closed and she forgot herself again.

"What was it you wanted to try to do?" he asked gently.

She roused herself, as before, with a start.

"To try," she said,— "to try to do something for the girl."

He did not understand what she meant until she had dragged herself up upon the pillow and leaned forward, touching him with her hand; she had gathered all her strength for the effort.

"I am an outcast," she said,— "an outcast!"

The simple and bare words were so terrible that he could scarcely bear them, but he controlled himself by a strong effort.

A faint colour crept up on her cheek.

"You don't understand," she said.

"Yes," he answered slowly, "I think I do."

She fell back upon her pillows.

"I won't tell you the whole story," she said. "It is an ugly one, and she will be ready enough with it when her turn comes. She has understood all her life. She has never been a child. She seemed to fasten her eyes upon me from the hour of her birth, and I have felt them ever since.

Keep her away," with a shudder. "Don't let her come in."

A sudden passion of excitement seized upon her.

"I don't know why I should care," she cried.

"There is no reason why she should not live as I have lived—but she will not—she will not. I have reached the end, and she knows it. She sits and looks on and says nothing, but her eyes force me to speak. They forced me to come here—to try—to make a last effort. If Steven Murdoch had lived——"

She stopped a moment.

"You are a poor man," she said.

"Yes," he answered. "I am a mechanic."

"Then—you cannot—do it."

She spoke helplessly, wildly.

"There is nothing to be done. There is no one else. She will be all alone."

Then he comprehended her meaning fully.

"No," he said, "I am not so poor as that. I am not a poorer man than my father was, and I can do what he would have done, if he had lived. My mother will care for the girl, if that is what you wish."

"What I wish!" she echoed. "I wish for nothing—but I must do something for her—before—before—before——"

She broke off, but began again.

"You are like your father. You make things seem simple. You speak as if you were undertaking nothing."

"It is not much to do," he answered, "and we could not do less. I will go to my mother and tell her that she is needed here. She will come to you."

She turned her eyes on him in terror.

"You think," she whispered, "that I shall die soon—*soon!*"

He did not answer her. He could not. She wrung her hands and dashed them open upon the bed, panting.

"Oh," she cried, "my God! It is over! I have come to the end of it—the end! To have only one life—and to have done with it—and lie here! To have lived—and loved—and triumphed, and to know it is over! One may defy all the rest, the whole world, but not this. It is *done!*"

Then she turned to him again, desperately.

"Go to your mother," she said. "Tell her to come. I want some one in the room with me. I won't be left alone with *her*. I cannot bear it."

On going out he found the girl sitting at the head of the stairs. She rose and stood aside to let him pass, looking at him unflinchingly.

"Are you coming back again?" she demanded.

"Yes," he answered, "I am coming back again."

In half an hour he reascended the staircase, bringing his mother with him. When they entered the room in which the dying woman lay, Mrs. Murdoch went to the bed and bent over her.

"My son has brought me to do what I can for you," she said, "and to tell you that he will keep his promise."

The woman looked up. For a moment it seemed that she had half forgotten. A change had come upon her even in the intervening half-hour.

"His promise," she said. "Yes, he will keep it."

At midnight she died. Mother and son were in the room; the girl sat in a chair at the bedside. Her hands were clasped upon her knee; she sat without motion. At a few minutes before the stroke of twelve the woman awoke from the heavy sleep in which she had lain. She awoke with a start and a cry, and lay staring at the girl, whose steady eyes were fixed upon her. Her lips moved, and at last she spoke.

“Forgive me!” she cried. “Forgive me!”

Murdoch and his mother rose, but the girl did not stir.

“For what?” she asked.

“For—” panted the woman, “for——”

But the sentence remained unfinished. The girl did not utter a word. She sat looking at the dying woman in silence — only looking at her, not once moving her eyes from the face which, a moment later, was merely a mask of stone which lay upon the pillow, gazing back at her with a fixed stare.

## CHAPTER XI.

## MISS FFRENCH RETURNS.

THEY took the girl home with them, and three days later the Ffrenchs returned. They came entirely unheralded, and it was Janey who brought the news of their arrival to the Works.

"They've coom," she said, in passing Murdoch on her way to her father. "Mester Ffrench an' *her*. They rode through th' town this mornin' i' a kerridge. Nobody knowed about it till they seed 'em."

The news was the principal topic of conversation through the day, and the comments made were numerous and varied. The most general opinions were that Ffrench was in a "tight place," or had "getten some crank i' hond."

"He's noan fond enow o' th' place to ha' coom back fur nowt," said Floxham. "He's a bit harder up than common, that's it."

In the course of the morning Haworth came in. Murdoch was struck with his unsettled and restless air; he came in awkwardly, and looking as if he had something to say, but though he loitered about some time, he did not say it.

“Come up to the house to-night,” he broke out at last. “I want company.”

It occurred to Murdoch that he wished to say more, but, after lingering for a few minutes, he went away. As he crossed the threshold, however, he paused uneasily.

“I say,” he said, “Ffrench has come back.”

“So I heard,” Murdoch answered.

When he presented himself at the house in the evening, Haworth was alone as usual. Wines were on the table, and he seemed to have drunk deeply. He was flushed, and showed still the touch of uneasiness and excitement he had betrayed in the morning.

“I’m glad you’ve come,” he said. “I’m out of soarts—or something.”

He ended with a short laugh, and turned about to pour out a glass of wine. In doing so his



hand trembled so that a few drops fell upon it. He shook them off angrily.

"What's up with me?" he said.

He drained the glass at a draught, and filled it again.

"I saw Ffrench to-day," he said. "I saw them both."

"Both!" repeated Murdoch, wondering at him.

"Yes. She is with him."

"She!" and then remembering the episode of the handkerchief, he added, rather slowly, "You mean Miss Ffrench?"

Haworth nodded.

He was pushing his glass to and fro with shaking hands, his voice was hoarse and uncertain.

"I passed the carriage on the road," he said, "and Ffrench stopped it to speak to me. He's not much altered. I never saw her before. She's a woman now—and a handsome woman, by George!"

The last words broke from him as if he could not control them. He looked up at Murdoch,

and as their eyes met he seemed to let himself loose.

“I may as well make a clean breast of it,” he said. “I’m—I’m hard hit. I’m hard hit.”

Murdoch flinched. He would rather not have heard the rest. He had had emotion enough during the last few days, and this was of a kind so novel that he was overwhelmed by it. But Haworth went on—

“It’s a queer thing,” he said. “I can’t quite make it out. I—I feel as if I must talk—about it—and yet there’s naught to say. I’ve seen a woman that’s—that’s taken hold on me.”

He passed his hands across his lips, which were parched and stiff.

“You know the kind of a fellow I’ve been,” he said. “I’ve known women enough, and too many; but there’s never been one like this. There’s always been plenty like the rest. I sat and stared at this one like a blockhead. She set me trembling. It came over me all at once. I don’t know what Ffrench thought. I said to myself, ‘Here’s the first woman that ever held me back.’ She’s one of your high kind, that’s

hard to get nigh. She's got a way to set a man mad. She'll be hard to get at, by George!"

Murdoch felt his pulse start. The man's emotion had communicated itself to him, so far at least.

"I don't know much of women," he said. "I've not been thrown among them; I——"

"No," said Haworth roughly, "they're not in your line, lad. If they were, happen I shouldn't be so ready to speak out."

Then he began and told his story more minutely, relating how, as he drove to the Works, he had met the carriage, and Ffrench had caught sight of him and ordered the servant to stop; how he had presented his daughter, and spoken as if she had heard of him often before; how she had smiled a little, but had said nothing.

"She's got a way which makes a man feel as if she was keeping something back, and sets him to wondering what it is. She's not likely to be forgot soon; she gives a chap something to think over."

He talked fast and heatedly, and sometimes seemed to lose himself. Now and then he stopped,

and sat brooding a moment in silence, and then roused himself with a start, and drank more wine and grew more flushed and excited.

After one of these fitful reveries, he broke out afresh, with queer uneasiness.

"I—wonder what folk'll say to her of me. They won't give me an over good name, I'll warrant. What a fool I've been! What a d—— fool I've been all my life! Let them say what they like. They'll make me black enough; but there is plenty would like to stand in Jem Haworth's shoes. I've never been beat yet. I've stood up and held my own,—and women *like* that. And as to th' name," with rough banter, "it's not chaps like you they fancy, after all."

"As to that," said Murdoch coldly, "I've told you I know nothing of women and their ways:"

He felt restive without knowing why. He was glad when he could free himself and get out into the fresh night air; it seemed all the fresher after the atmosphere he had breathed indoors.

The night was bright and mild. After cold, un-spring-like weather had come an ephemeral balminess. The moon was at full, and he stepped

across the threshold into a light as clear as day.

He walked rapidly, scarcely noting the road he passed over until he had reached the house which stood alone among its trees,—the house Haworth had pointed out a few months before. It was lighted now, and its lights attracted his attention.

"It's a brighter-looking place than it was then," he said.

He never afterward could exactly recall how it was that at this moment he started, turned, and for a breath's space came to a full stop.

He had passed out of the shadow of the high boundary wall into the broad moonlight which flooded the gateway. The iron gates were open, and a white figure stood in the light—the figure of a tall young woman who did not move.

He was so near that her dress almost touched him. In another moment he was hurrying along the road again, not having spoken, and scarcely understanding the momentary shock he had received.

"That," he said to himself,—“that was she?”

When he reached home and opened the door of the little parlour, the girl Christian Murdoch was sitting alone by the dying fire in the grate. She turned and looked at him curiously.

"Something," she said, "has happened to you. What is it?"

"I don't know," he answered, "that anything has happened to me—anything of importance."

She turned to the fire again and sat gazing at it, rubbing the back of one hand slowly with the palm of the other, as it lay on her knee.

"Something has happened to *me*," she said.

"To-day I have seen some one I know."

"Some one you know?" he echoed. "Here?"

She nodded her head.

"Some one I know," she repeated, "though I do not know her name. I should like to know it."

"*Her* name," he said. "Then it is a woman?"

"Yes, a woman—a young woman. I saw her abroad—four—five times."

She began to check off the number of times on her fingers.

"In Florence once," she said. "In Munich twice; in Paris—yes, in Paris twice again."

"When and how?" he asked.

As he spoke, he thought of the unruffled serenity of the face he had just seen.

"Years ago, the first time," she answered, without the least change of tone, "in a church in Florence. I went in because I was wet and cold and hungry, and it was light and warm there. I was a little thing, and left to ramble in the streets. I liked the streets better than my mother's room. I was standing in the church, looking at the people and trying to feel warm, when a girl came in with a servant. She was handsome and well-dressed, and looked almost like a woman. When she saw me she laughed. I was such a little thing, and so draggled and forlorn. That was why she laughed. The next year I saw her again, at Munich. Her room was across the street and opposite mine, and she sat at the window, amusing herself by playing with her dog and staring at me. She had forgotten me, but I had not forgotten her; and she laughed at me again. In Paris it was the same thing. Our windows were opposite each other again. It was five years after; but that time she knew me, though she

pretended she did not. She drove past the house to-day, and I saw her. I should like to know her name."

"I think I can tell you what it is," he said. "She is a Miss Ffrench. Her father is a Broxton man. They have a place here."

"Have they?" she asked. "Will they live here?"

"I believe so," he answered.

She sat for a moment, rubbing her hand slowly as before, and then she spoke.

"So much the worse," she said,—“so much the worse for me.”

She went up to her room when she left him. It was a little room in the second story, and she had become fond of it. She often sat alone there. She had been sitting at its window when Rachel Ffrench had driven by in the afternoon. As she entered she saw the window was still open, and a gust of wind passing through it had scattered several light articles about the floor. She went to pick them up. They were principally loose papers, and as she bent to raise the first one she discovered that it was yellow with age and covered



with a rough drawing of some mechanical appliance. Another and another presented the same plan—drawn again and again, elaborately and with great pains at times, and then hastily as if some new thought had suggested itself. On several were written dates and on others a few words.

She was endeavouring to decipher some of these faintly-written words when a fresh gust of rising wind rushed past her as she stood, and immediately there fell upon her ear a slight ghostly rustle. Near her was a small unused closet, whose door had been thrown open, and as she turned toward it there fluttered from one of the shelves a sheet of paper yellower than the rest. She picked it up and read the words written upon the back of the drawing. They had been written twenty-six years before.

“To-day the child was born. It is a boy. By the time he is a year old my work will be done.”

The girl’s heart began to beat quickly. The papers rustled again, and a kind of fear took possession of her.

"*He* wrote it," she said aloud. "The man who is dead—who is *dead*; and it was not finished at all."

She closed the window, eager to shut out the wind; then she closed the door and went back to the papers. Her fancies concerning Steven Murdoch had taken very definite shape from the first. She knew two things of him; that he had been gentle and unworldly, and that he had cherished throughout his life a hope which had eluded him until death had come between him and his patient and unflagging labour.

The sight of the yellow faded papers moved her to a powerful feeling. She had never had a friend; she had stood alone from her earliest childhood, and here was a creature who had been desolate too—who must have been desolate, since he had been impelled to write the simple outcome of his thoughts again and again upon the paper he wrought on, as if no human being had been near to hear.

It was this which touched her most of all. There was scarcely a sheet upon which some few words were not written. Each new plan bore its

date, and some hopeful or weary thought. He had been tired often, but never faithless to his belief. The end was never very far off. A few days, one more touch, would bring it,—and then he had forgotten all the past.

"I can afford to forget it," he said once. "It only seems strange now that it should have lasted so long, when so few steps remain to be taken."

These words had been written on his leaving America. He was ready for his departure. They were the last record. When she had read them, Christian pushed the papers away, and sat gazing into space with dilated eyes.

"He died," she said. "He is *dead*. Nothing can bring him back; and it is forgotten."

## CHAPTER XII.

## GRANNY DIXON.

THE next time Janey brought the paternal dinner to the yard she sought out Murdoch in a dejected mood. She found him reading over his lunch in the sunshine, and she sat down opposite to him, folding her arms on her lap.

"We're i' trouble agen at our house," she said.  
"We're allus i' trouble. If it is na one thing, it's another."

Murdoch shut his book and leaned back upon his pile of lumber to listen. He always listened.

"What is it this time?" he asked.

"This toime?" querulously. "This is th' worst o' th' lot. Granny Dixon's come back."

"Granny Dixon?"

Janey shook her head.

"Tha knows nowt about her," she said. "I niver tow'd thee nowt. She's my feyther's

grandmother, an' she's ower ninety years owd, an' she's getten money. If it wur na fur that no one ud stand her, but"—with a sigh—"foak conna turn away brass."

Having relieved herself of which sentiment, she plunged into the subject with fresh asperity.

"Theer's no knowin' how to tak' her," she said. "Yo' mun shout at th' top o' yore voice to mak' her hear, an' she wunnot let nowt go by. She mun hear aw as is goin'. She's out wi' Mester Hixon at th' chapel because she says she conna hear him an' he does it a-purpose. When she wur out wi' ivvery body else she used to say she wur goin' to leave her brass to him, an' she invited him to tea ivvery neet fur a week, an' had him set by her chair an' talk. It wur summer toime, an' I've seed him set an' shout wi' th' sweat a-pourin' down his face an' his neck-tie aw o' one soide, an' at th' eend o' a week he had a quinsy, as wur nigh bein' th' eend o' him. An' she nivver forgive him. She said as he wur an impident chap as thowt hissen too good fur his betters."

Murdoch expressed his sympathy promptly.

"I wish tha'd coom up an' talk to her some day thysen," said Janey. "It ud rest us a bit," candidly. "Yo're gotten th' kind o' voice to mak' folk hear, though yo' dunnot speak so loud, an' if yo' get close up to her ear an' say things slow, yo'd get used to it i' toime."

"I'll come some day," answered Murdoch, speculating with some doubt as to the possible result of the visit.

Her mind relieved, Janey rose to take her departure. Suddenly, however, a new idea presented itself to her active mind.

"Has tha seen Miss Ffrench yet?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered.

"What does tha think on her?"

He picked up his book and reopened it.

"I only saw her for an instant," he said. "I hadn't time to think anything."

On his way from his work a few days later, he stopped at the Briarleys' cottage. It was swept and garnished; there were no traces of the children about. Before he reached the house, there had been borne to him the sound

of a voice reading at its highest and shrillest pitch, and he had recognised it as Janey's.

As he entered, that young person rose panting from her seat, in her eagerness almost dropping the graphically illustrated paper she held in her hand.

"Eh!" she exclaimed. "I *am* glad to see thee! I could na ha' stood it mich longer. She would ha' me read the 'To-be-continyerd' one, an' I've bin at it nigh an hour."

Granny Dixon turned on her sharply.

"What art tha stoppin' fur?" she demanded. "What's th' matter wi' thee?"

Murdoch gave a slight start. The sound was so tremendous that it seemed almost impossible that it should proceed from the small and shrivelled figure in the arm-chair.

"What art tha stoppin' fur?" she repeated. "Get on wi' thee."

Janey drew near and spoke in her ear.

"It's Mester Murdoch," she proclaimed; "him as I tow'd yo' on."

The little bent figure turned slowly, and Murdoch felt himself transfixed by the gaze of

a pair of large keen eyes. . They had been handsome eyes half a century before, and the wrinkled and seamed face had had its comeliness too.

"Tha said he wur a workin' mon," she cried, after a pause. "What did tha tell me that theer fur?"

"He *is* a workin' mon," said Janey. "He's gotten his work-cloas on now. Does na tha see 'em?"

"Cloas!" announced the Voice again. "Cloas i'deed! A mon is na made out o' cloas. I've seed workin' men afore i' my day, an' I know 'em."

Then she extended her hand, crooking the forefinger like a claw, in a beckoning gesture.

"Coom tha here," she commanded, "and set thyself down to talk to me."

She gave the order in the manner of a female potentate, and Murdoch obeyed her with a sense of overpowering fascination.

"Wheer art tha fro'?" she demanded.

He made his reply, "From America," as distinct as possible, and was relieved to find that it reached her at once.



"'Merica?" she repeated. "I've heerd o' 'Merica often enow. That's wheer th' blacks live, an' th' Indians. I knowed a young chap as went theer, an' th' Indians scalped him. He went theer because I would na ha' him. It wur when I wur a lass."

She paused a moment and then said the last words over again, nodding her head with a touch of grim satisfaction.

"He went theer because I would na ha' him. It wur when I wur a lass."

He was watching her so intently that he was quite startled a second time when she turned her eyes upon him and spoke again, still nodding.

"I wur a han'some lass," she said. "I wur a han'some lass—seventy year' ago."

It was quite plain that she had been. The thing which was least pleasant about her now was a certain dead and withered suggestion of a beauty of a not altogether sinless order.

The recollection of the fact seemed to enliven her so far that she was inspired to conducting the greater part of the conversation herself.

Her voice grew louder and louder, a dull red began to show itself on her cheeks, and her eyes sparkled. She had been "a han'some lass, seventy year' ago, an' had had her day—as theer wur dead folk could tell."

"She'll go on i' that rood aw neet, if summat dunnot tak' her off it," said Janey. "She loikes to talk about that theer better than owt else."

But something did happen "to tak' her off it."

"Tha'st gotten some reason i' thee," she announced. "Tha does na oppen tha mouth as if tha wanted to swally folk when tha says what tha'st gotten to say. Theer's no workin' men's ways about thee—cloas or no cloas."

"That's th' way she goes on," said Janey. "She canna bide folk to look soft when they'se shoutin' to her. That was one o' th' things she had agen Mester Hixon. She said he gotten so red i' th' face it put her out o' patience."

"I loike a mon as is na a foo'," proclaimed Granny Dixon. But there her voice changed and grew sharp and tremulous. "Wheer's that flower?" she cried. "Who's gotten it?"

Janey turned towards the door and uttered a shrill little cry of excitement.

"It's Miss Ffrench," she said. "She's—she's standin' at th' door."

It would have been impossible to judge from her expression how long she had been there. She stood upon the threshold with a faint smile upon her lips, and spoke to Janey.

"I want to see your mother," she said.

"I'll—I'll go and tell her," the child faltered.

"Will yo' come in?"

She hesitated a second and then came in. Murdoch had arisen. She did not seem to see him as she passed before him to reach the chair in which she sat down. In fact she expressed scarcely a shadow of recognition of her surroundings. But upon Granny Dixon had fallen a sudden feverish tremor.

"Who did she say yo' wur?" she cried. "I did na hear her."

The visitor turned and confronted her.

"I am Rachel Ffrench," she answered, in a clear, high voice.

The dull red deepened upon the old woman's cheeks, and her eyes gained new fire.

"Yo're a good un to mak' a body hear," she said. "An' I know yo'."

Miss Ffrench made no reply. She smiled incredulously at the fire.

The old woman moved restlessly.

"Aye, but I do," she cried. "I know yo'. Yo're Ffrench fro' head to foot. Whêer did yo' get that?"

She was pointing at a flower at Miss Ffrench's throat—a white, strongly fragrant, hot-house flower. Miss Ffrench cast a downward glance at it.

"There are plenty to be had," she said. "I got it from home."

"I've seen 'em before," said Granny Dixon. "*He* used to wear 'em i' his button-hole."

Miss Ffrench made no reply and she went on, her tones increasing in volume with her excitement.

"I'm talkin' o' Will Ffrench," she said. "He wur thy gran'feyther. He wur dead afore yo' wur born."

Miss Ffrench seemed scarcely interested, but Granny Dixon had not finished.

"He wur a bad un!" she cried. "He wur a devil! He wur a devil out an' out. I knowed him an' he knowed me."

Then she bent forward and touched Miss Ffrench's arm.

"Theer wur na a worse un nor a bigger devil nowheer," she said. "An' yo're th' very moral on him."

Miss Ffrench got up and turned toward the door to speak to Mrs. Briarley, who that moment arrived in great haste carrying the baby, out of breath, and stumbling in her tremor at receiving gentlefolk company.

"Your visitor has been talking to me," she remarked, her little smile showing itself again. "She says my grandfather was a devil."

She answered all Mrs. Briarley's terrified apologies with the same little smile. She had been passing by and had remembered that the housekeeper needed assistance in some matter and it had occurred to her to come in. That

was all, and having explained herself, she went away as she had come.

“Eh!” fretted Mrs. Briarley, “to think o’ that theer owd besom talkin’ i’ that rood to a lady. That’s allus th’ way wi’ her. She’d mak’ trouble anywheer. She made trouble enow when she wur young. She wur na no better than she should be then, an’ she’s nowt so mich better now.”

“What’s that tha’rt saying?” demanded the Voice. “A noice way that wur fur a lady to go out wi’out so mich as sayin’ good-day to a body. She’s as loike him as two peas—an’ he *wur* a devil. Here,” to Murdoch, “pick up that theer flower she’s dropped.”

Murdoch turned to the place she pointed out. The white flower lay upon the flagged floor. He picked it up and handed it to her with a vague recognition of the powerfulness of its fragrance. She took it and sat mumbling over it.

“It’s th’ very same,” she muttered. “He used to wear ’em i’ his button-hole when he coom. An’ she’s the very moral on him.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

## MR. FFRENCH VISITS THE WORKS.

THERE were few men in Broxton or the country surrounding it who were better known than Gerard Ffrench. In the first place, he belonged, as it were, to Broxton, and his family for several generations back had belonged to it. His great-grandfather had come to the place a rich man and had built a huge house outside the village, and as the village had become a town the Ffrenchs had held their heads high. They had confined themselves to Broxton until Gerard Ffrench took his place. They had spent their lives there and their money. Those who lived to remember the youth and manhood of the present Ffrench's father had, like Granny Dixon, their stories to tell. His son, however, was a man of a different mould. There were no evil stories of him. He was a well-bred and agreeable

person and lived a refined life. But he was a man with tastes which scarcely belonged to his degree.

"I ought to have been born in the lower classes and have had my way to make," he had been heard to say.

Unfortunately, however, he had been born a gentleman of leisure and educated as one. But this did not prevent him from indulging in his proclivities. He had made more than one wild business venture which had electrified his neighbours. Once he had been on the verge of a great success and again he had overstepped the verge of a great loss. He had lost money, but he had never lost confidence in his business ability.

"I have gained experience," he said. "I shall know better next time."

His wife had died early and his daughter had spent her girlhood with a relative abroad. She had developed into beauty so faultless that it had been said that its order belonged rather to the world of pedestals and catalogues than to ordinary young womanhood.



But the truth was that she was not an ordinary young woman at all.

"I suppose," she said at dinner on the evening of her visit to the Briarleys' cottage,—“I suppose these work-people are very radical in their views.”

“Why?” asked her father.

“I went into a cottage this afternoon and found a young workman there in his working clothes, and instead of leaving the room he remained in it, as if that was the most natural thing to do. It struck me that he must belong to the class of people we read of.”

“I don't know much of the political state of affairs now,” said Mr. Ffrench. “Some of these fellows are always bad enough, and this Haworth rose from the ranks. He was a foundry lad himself.”

“I met Mr. Haworth, too,” said Miss Ffrench. “He stopped in the street to stand looking after the carriage. He is a very big person.”

“He is a very successful fellow,” with something like a sigh. “A man who has made of himself what he has through sheer power of will and business capacity is a genius.”

"What has he made of himself?" inquired Miss French.

"Well," replied her father, "the man is actually a millionaire. He is at the head of his branch of the trade; he leads the other manufacturers; he is a kind of king in the place. People may ignore him if they choose. He does not care, and there is no reason why he should."

Mr. Ffrench became rather excited. He flushed and spoke uneasily.

"There are plenty of gentlemen," he said. "We have gentlemen enough and to spare, but we have few men who can make a path through the world for themselves as he has done. For my part, I admire the man. He has the kind of face which moves me to admiration."

"I dare say," said Miss Ffrench, slowly, "that you would have admired the young workman I saw. It struck me at the time that you would."

"By the by," her father asked, with a new interest, "what kind of a young fellow was he? Perhaps it was the young fellow who is half American and——"

“He did not look like an Englishman,” she interrupted. “He was too dark and tall and unconscious of himself, in spite of his awkwardness. He did not know that he was out of place.”

“I have no doubt it was this Murdoch. He is a peculiar fellow, and I am as much interested in him as in Haworth. His father was a Lancashire man,—a half-crazy inventor, who died leaving an unfinished model which was to have made his fortune. I have heard a great deal of the son. I wish I had seen him.”

Rachel Ffrench made no reply. She had heard this kind of thing before. There had been a young man from Cumberland who had been on the point of inventing a new propelling power, but had, somehow or other, not done it; there had been a machinist from Manchester who had created an entirely new order of loom—which had not worked; and there had been half a dozen smaller lights whose inventions, though less involved, would still have made fortunes—if they had been quite practical. But Mr. Ffrench had mounted his hobby, which always stood saddled

and bridled. He talked of Haworth and Haworth's success, the Works and their machinery. He calculated the expenses and the returns of the business. He even took out his tablets to get at the profits more accurately, and got down the possible cost of various improvements which had suggested themselves.

"He has done so much," he said, "that it would be easy for him to do more. He could accomplish anything if he were a better educated man—or had an educated man as partner. They say," he remarked afterward, "that this Murdoch is not an ignoramus by any means. I hear that he has a positive passion for books, and that he has made several quite remarkable improvements and additions to the machinery at the Works. It would be an odd thing," biting the end of his pencil with a thoughtful air, "it would be a *dramatic* sort of thing if he should make a success of the idea the poor fellow his father left incomplete."

Indeed Miss Ffrench was quite prepared for his after-statement that he intended to pay a visit to the Works and their owner the next morning,

though she could not altogether account for the slight hint of secret embarrassment which she fancied displayed itself when he made the announcement.

"It's true the man is rough and high-handed enough," he said. "He has not been too civil in his behaviour to me in times gone by, but I should like to know more of him in spite of it. He is worth cultivating."

He appeared at the Works the following morning, awakening thereby some interest among the shrewder spirits who knew him of old.

"What's he up to now?" they said to each other. "He's gotten some crank i' his yed or he would na be here."

Not being at any time specially shrewd in the study of human nature, it must be confessed that Mr. Ffrench was not prepared for the reception he met with in the owner's room. In his previous rare interviews with Jem Haworth he had been accorded but slight respect. His advances had been met in a manner savouring of rough contempt, his ephemeral hobbies disposed of with the amiable candour of the practical and not too

polished mind ; he knew he had been jeered at openly at times, and now the man who had regarded him lightly and as if he felt that he held the upper hand, received him almost with a confused, self-conscious air. He even flushed when he got up and awkwardly shook hands.

"Perhaps," said his visitor to himself, "events have taught him to feel the lack in himself after all."

"I looked forward, before my return, to calling upon you," he said aloud. "And I am glad to have the opportunity at last."

Haworth reseated himself after giving him a chair, and answered with a nod and a somewhat incoherent welcome.

Ffrench settled himself with an agreeable consciousness of being less at a loss before the man than he had ever been in his life.

"What I have seen abroad," he said, "has added to the interest I have always felt in our own manufactures. You know that is a thing I have always cared for most. People have called it my hobby, though I don't think that is quite

the right name for it. You have done a great deal since I went away."

"I shall do more yet," said Haworth with effort, "before I've done with the thing."

"You've done a good deal for Broxton. The place has grown wonderfully. Those cottages of yours are good work."

Haworth warmed up. His hand fell upon the table before him heavily.

"It's not Broxton I'm aimin' at," he said. "Broxton's naught to me. I'll have good work or none. It's this place here I'm at work on, I've said I'd set Haworth's above 'em all, and I'll do it."

"You have done it already," answered Ffrench.

"Ay, but I tell you I'll set it higher yet. I've got the money and I've got the will. There's none on 'em can back down Jem Haworth."

"No," said Ffrench, suddenly and unaccountably conscious of a weakness in himself and his position. He did not quite understand the man. His heat was a little confusing.

"This," he decided mentally, "is *his* hobby."

He sat and listened with real excitement as

Haworth launched out more freely and with a touch of braggadocio.

He had set out in his own line, and he meant to follow it in spite of all the gentlemen manufacturers in England. He had asked help from none of them, and they had given him none. He'd brought up the trade and he'd made money. There wasn't a bigger place in the country than Haworth's, nor a place that did the work it did. He'd have naught cheap, and he'd have no fancy prices. The chaps that worked for him knew their business, and knew they'd lose naught by sticking to it. They knew, too, they'd got a master who looked sharp after 'em and stood no cheek nor no slack dodges.

"I've got the best lot in the trade under me," he said. "I've got a young chap in the engine-room as knows more about machinery than half the top-sawyers in England. By George! I wish I knew as much. He's a quiet chap, and he's young; but if he knew how to look a bit sharper after himself, he'd make his fortune. The trouble is he's too quiet and a bit too much of a gentleman without knowing it. By George! he *is* a



gentleman, if he is naught but Jem Haworth's engineer."

"He is proud of the fellow," thought Ffrench.  
"*Proud* of him, because he *is* a gentleman."

"He knows what's worth knowing," Haworth went on. "And he keeps it to himself till the time comes to use it. He's a chap that keeps his mouth shut. He comes up to my house and reads my books. I've not been brought up to books myself, d—— it, but there's none of 'em *he* can't tackle. He's welcome to use aught I've got. I'm not such a fool as to grudge him what all my brass won't buy me."

"I think I've heard of him," said Ffrench.  
"You mean Murdoch."

"Ay," Haworth answered, "I mean Murdoch; and there's not many chaps like him. He's the only one of the sort I ever run up against."

"I should like to see him," said Ffrench.  
"My daughter saw him yesterday in one of the workmen's cottages, and," with a faint smile, "he struck her as having rather the air of a radical. It was one of her feminine fancies."

There was a moment's halt and then Haworth made his reply as forcibly as ever.

"Radical be hanged," he said. "He's got work o' his own to attend to. He's one of the kind as leaves th' radicals alone. He's a straightforward chap that cares more for his books than aught else. I won't say," a trifle grudgingly, "that he's not a bit too strait in some things."

There was a halt again here, which Ffrench rather wondered at, then Haworth spoke again, bluntly and yet lagging a little.

"I—I saw her, Miss Ffrench, myself yesterday. I was walking down the street when her carriage passed."

Ffrench looked at him with an inward start. It was his turn to flush now.

"I think," he said, "that she mentioned it to me."

He even appeared a trifle preoccupied for some minutes afterwards, and when he roused himself, laughed and spoke nervously. The colour did not die out of his face during the remainder of his visit; even after he had made the tour of the Works and looked at the

machinery, and given a good deal of information concerning the manner in which things were done on the Continent, it was still there, and perhaps it deepened slightly as he spoke his parting words.

“Then,” he said, “I — we shall have the pleasure of seeing you at dinner to-morrow evening?”

“Yes,” Haworth answered, “I’ll be there.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

## NEARLY AN ACCIDENT.

It was Rachel Ffrench who received her father's guest the following evening. Mr. Ffrench had been delayed in his return from town, and was still in his dressing-room; and accordingly when Haworth was announced, the doors of the drawing-room being flung open, revealed to him only the figure of his host's daughter.

The room was long and stately, and after she had risen from her seat, it took Miss Ffrench some little time to make her way from one end to the other. Haworth had unconsciously halted after crossing the threshold, and it was not until she was half-way down the room that he bestirred himself to advance to meet her. He did not know why he had paused at first, and his sudden knowledge that he had done so roused him to a momentary savage anger.

"Dang it!" he said to himself; "why did I stand there like a fool?"

The reason could not be explained briefly. His own house was a far more splendid affair than Ffrench's, and among his visitors from London and Manchester there were costumes far more gorgeous than that of Miss Ffrench. He was used to the flash of jewels and the gloss of brilliant colours. Miss Ffrench wore no ornaments at all, and her dress was only a simple and close-clinging affair of dark purple.

A couple of paces from him she stopped and held out her hand.

"My father will be glad to see you," she said. "He was, unfortunately, detained this evening by business. He will be down-stairs in a few moments."

His sense of being at a disadvantage when, after she had led him back to the fire, they were seated, was overwhelming. A great heat rushed over him; the hush of the room, broken only by the light ticking of the clock, was misery. His eye travelled stealthily from the hem of her dark purple gown to the crowning waves of her fair

hair, but he had not a word to utter. It made him feel almost brutal.

"But the day'll come *yet*," he protested inwardly, and feeling his weakness as he thought it, "when I'll hold my own. I've done it before, and I'll do it again."

Rachel Ffrench regarded him with a clear and direct gaze. She did not look away from him at all; she was not at all embarrassed, and though she did not smile, the calmness of her face was quite as perfect in expression.

"My father told me of his visit to your place," she said. "He interested me very much. I should like to see the Works if you admit visitors. I know nothing of such things."

"Any time you choose to come," he answered, "I'll show you round—and be glad to do it. It's a pretty big place of the kind."

He was glad she had chosen this subject. If she would only go on, it would not be so bad. He would be in his own groove. And she did go on.

"I've seen very little of Broxton," she proceeded. "I spent a few weeks here before going

abroad again with my father, and I cannot say I have been very fond of it. I do not like England ; and on the Continent one hears unpleasant things of English manufacturing towns. I think," smiling a little for the first time, "that one always associates them with 'strikes' and squalid people."

"There is not much danger of strikes here," he replied. "I give my chaps fair play and let 'em know who's master."

"But they have radical clubs," she said, "and talk politics, and get angry when they are not sober. I've heard that much already."

"They don't talk 'em in *my* place," he answered, dogmatically.

He was not quite sure whether it relieved him or not, when Ffrench entered at this moment and interrupted them. He was more at his ease with Ffrench, and yet he felt himself at a disadvantage still. He scarcely knew how the night passed. A feverish unrest was upon him. Sometimes he hardly heard what his entertainer said, and Mr. Ffrench was in one of his most voluble and diffuse moods. He displayed his knowledge of

trade and mechanics with gentlemanly ostentation; he talked of "Trades' Unions" and the masters' difficulties; he introduced manufacturers' politics and expatiated on Continental weakness. He weighed the question of demand and supply and touched on "protective tariff."

"D—— him," said Haworth, growing bitterly mentally, "he thinks I'm up to naught else, and he's right."

As her father talked, Miss Ffrench joined in but seldom. She listened and looked on in a manner of which Haworth was conscious from first to last. The thought made its way into his mind, finally, that she looked on as if these matters did not touch her at all, and she was only faintly curious about them. Her eyes rested on himself with a secret air of watchful interest; he met them more than once as he looked up, and she did not turn them away. He sat through it all, full of vengeful resentment, and was at once wretched and happy, in spite of it and himself.

When at her father's request she played and sang, he sat apart moody, and yet full of clumsy



rapture. He knew nothing of the music, but his passion found a tongue in it nevertheless. If she had played badly, he would have taken the lack of harmony for granted ; but as she played well, he experienced a pleasure, while he did not comprehend.

When it was all over, and he found himself out alone in the road in the dark, he was feverish still, and his throat was dry.

“I don’t seem to have made naught,” he said, “at th’ first sight.” Then he added, with dogged exultation, “But I don’t look for smooth sailing. I know enough for that. I’ve seen her and been nigh her, and that’s worth setting down—with a chap like me.”

At the end of the week a carriage drove up to the gateway of the Works, and Mr. Ffrench and his daughter descended from it. Mr. Ffrench was in the best of humours ; he was in his element as he expatiated upon the size and appointments of the place. He had been expatiating upon them during the whole of the drive.

On their being joined by Haworth himself,

Rachel Ffrench decided inwardly that here upon his own domain he was not so wholly objectionable as she had fancied at first—even that he was deserving of a certain degree of approval. Despite the signs of elated excitement, her quick eye detected at once that he was more at his ease. His big frame did not look out of place; he moved as if he was at home, and upon the whole his rough air of authority, and the promptness with which his commands were obeyed, did not displease her.

“He is master,” she said to herself.

She was fond of power, and liked the evidence of it in others. She did not object to the looks the men, who were at work, cast upon her as she went from one department to another. Her beauty had never yet failed to command masculine homage from all ranks. The great black fellows at the furnaces exchanged comments as she passed. They would have paused in their work to look at her if they had dared, but they did not dare. The object of their admiration bore it calmly; it neither confounded nor touched her; it did not move her at all.

Mr. Ffrench commented, examined, and explained with delightful eloquence.

"We are fortunate in timing our visit so well," he said to his daughter. "They are filling an immense order for the most important railroad in the country. On my honour, I would rather be at the head of such a gigantic establishment than sit on the throne of England! But where is this *protégé* of yours?" he said to Haworth at last. "I should like above all things to see him."

"Murdoch?" answered Haworth. "Oh, we're coming to *him* after a bit. He's in among the engines."

When they reached the engine-rooms Haworth presented him with little ceremony, and explained the purpose of their visit. They wanted to see the engines, and he was the man to make the most of them.

Mr. Ffrench's interest was awakened readily. The mechanic from Cumberland had been a pretentious ignoramus; the young man from Manchester had dropped his aspirates and worn loud plaids and flaming neckties, but this was a less objectionable form of genius.

Mr. Ffrench began to ask questions and make himself agreeable, and in a short time was very well entertained indeed.

Rachel Ffrench listened with but slight demonstrations of interest. She did not understand the conversation which was being carried on between her father and Murdoch, and she made no pretence of doing so.

"It is all very clear to *them*," she said to Haworth, as they stood near each other.

"It's all clear enough to him," said Haworth, signifying Murdoch with a gesture.

Upon which Miss Ffrench smiled a little. She was not sensitive upon the subject of her father's hobbies, and the coarse frankness of the remark amused her.

But notwithstanding her lack of interest she drew nearer to the engine finally and stood looking at it, feeling at once fascinated and unpleasantly overpowered by its heavy, invariable motion.

It was as she stood in this way a little later that Murdoch's glance fell upon her. The next instant, with the simultaneous cry of terror which

broke from the others, he had thrown himself forward and dragged her back by main force, and among the thunderous wheels and rods and shafts there was slowly twisted and torn and ground into shreds a fragment of the delicate fabric of her dress. It was scarcely the work of a second. Her father staggered toward them white and trembling.

"Good God!" he cried. "Good God! What——" the words died upon his bloodless lips.

She freed herself from Murdoch's grasp and stood upright. She did not look at him at all, she looked at her father and lightly brushed with her hand her sleeve at the wrist. Despite her pallor it was difficult to realise that she only held herself erect by a terrible effort of self-control.

"Why"—she said—"why did he touch me in that manner?"

Haworth uttered a smothered oath; Murdoch turned about and strode out of the room. He did not care to remain to hear the explanation.

As he went out into the open air a fellow-workman, passing by, stopped to stare at him.

“What’s up wi’ thee?” he asked. “Has tha been punsin’ Haworth o’er agen?” The incident referred to being always remembered as a savoury and delectable piece of humour.

Murdoch turned to him with a dazed look.

“I——,” he stammered—“we—have very nearly had an accident.” And went on his way without further explanation.

## CHAPTER XV.

"IT WOULD BE A GOOD THING."

Exciting events were not so common in Broxton and its vicinity that this one could remain in the background. It furnished a topic of conversation for the dinner and tea-tables of every family within ten miles of the place. On Murdoch's next visit to the Briarleys', Granny Dixon insisted on having the matter explained for the fortieth time, and was manifestly disgusted by the lack of dramatic incident connected with it.

"Tha seed her dress catch i' th' wheel an' dragged her back," she shouted. "Was na theer nowt else? Did na she swoond away, nor nothin'?"

"No," he answered. "She did not know what had happened at first."

Granny Dixon gave him a shrewd glance of

examination and then favoured him with a confidential remark, presented at the top of her voice.

"I conna bide her," she said.

"What did Mr. Ffrench say to thee?" asked Janey. "Does tha think he'll gie thee owt fur it?"

"No," answered Murdoch. "He won't do that."

"He owt to," said Janey, fretfully. "An' tha owt to tak' it, if he does. Tha does na think enow o' money an' th' loike. Yo'll nivver get on i' th' world if yo' mak' light o' money an' let it slip by yo'."

Floxham had told the story somewhat surlily to his friends, and his friends had retailed it over their beer, and the particulars had thus become common property.

"What did she say?" Floxham had remarked at the first relation. "She said nowt—that's what she said. She did na quoite mak' th' thing out at first, an' she stood theer brushin' th' black off her sleeve. Happen," sardonically, "she did na loike th' notion o' a workin' chap catchin' howd on her wi'out apologizin'."



Haworth asked Murdoch to spend an evening with him, and sat moody and silent through the greater part of it. At last—

"You think you've been devilish badly treated," he said. "But, by the Lord! I wish I was in your place."

"You wish," repeated Murdoch, "that you were in my place? I don't know that it's a particularly pleasant place to be in."

Haworth leaned forward upon the table and stared across at him gloomily.

"Look here," he said. "You know naught about her. She's hard to get at; but she'll remember what's happened; cool as she took it she'll remember it."

"I don't want her to remember it," returned Murdoch. "Why should it matter? It's a thing of yesterday. It was nothing but chance. Let it go."

"D— it!" said Haworth, with a restive moroseness. "I tell you I wish I'd been in your place—at twice the risk."

The same day Mr. Ffrench had made a pilgrimage to the Works for the purpose of

setting his mind at rest and expressing his gratitude in a graceful manner. In fact he was rather glad of the opportunity to present himself upon the ground so soon again. But on confronting the hero of the hour, he found that somehow the affair dwindled and assumed an altogether incidental and unheroic aspect. His rather high-flown phrases modified themselves and took a different tone.

"He is either very reserved or very shy," he said afterward to his daughter. "It is not easy to reach him at the outset. There seems a lack of enthusiasm about him, so to speak."

"Will he come to the house?" asked Miss Ffrench.

"Oh yes. I suppose he will come, but it was very plain that he would rather have stayed away. He had too much good taste to refuse point-blank to let you speak to him."

"Good taste!" repeated Miss Ffrench.

Her father turned upon her with manifest irritation.

"Good taste!" he repeated petulantly. "Cannot you see that the poor fellow is a gentleman? I wish you would show less of this nonsensical caste prejudice, Rachel."

"I suppose one necessarily dispenses with a good deal of it in a place like this," she answered. "In making friends with Mr. Haworth, for instance——"

Mr. Ffrench drew nearer to her and rested his elbow upon the mantelpiece with rather an embarrassed expression.

"I wish you to—to behave well to Haworth," he said, faltering. "I—a great deal may—may depend upon it."

She looked up at him at once, lifting her eyes in a serene glance.

"Do you want to go into the iron trade?" she asked relentlessly.

He blushed scarlet, but she did not move her eyes from his face on that account.

"What — what Haworth needs," he stammered, "is a — a man of education to — to assist him. A man who had studied the scientific features of—of things, might suggest

valuable ideas to him. There is an—an immense field open to a rich, enterprising fellow such as he is—a man who is fearless and—and who has the means to carry out his ventures."

"You mean a man who will try to do new things," she remarked. "Do you think he would?"

"The trouble has been," floundering more hopelessly than ever, "that his lack of cultivation has—well, has forced him to act in a single groove. If—if he had a—a partner who—knew the ropes, so to speak—his business would be doubled—trebled."

She repeated aloud one of his words.

"A partner," she said.

He ran his hand through his hair and stared at her, wishing that he could think of something decided to say.

"Does he know you would like to be his partner?" she asked next.

"N—no," he faltered, "not exactly."

She sat a moment looking at the fire.

"I do not believe he would do it," she said at

last. "He is too proud of having done everything single-handed."

Then she looked at her father again.

"If he would," she said, "and there were no rash ventures made, it would be a good thing."

## CHAPTER XVI.

"A POOR CHAP AS IS ALLUS I' TROUBLE."

"It was nothing but a chance, after all," said Murdoch to Rachel Ffrench, just as he had said to Haworth. "It happened that I was the first to see the danger."

She stood opposite to him upon the hearth in her father's house. Neither of them had sat down. She rested her arm upon the low mantelpiece and played with a flower she held in her hand. She looked at the flower as she made her reply.

"You think of it very lightly," she said, with rather cold deliberateness. He did not regard her furtively as Haworth had done. Raising her eyes suddenly, after she had said this, she met his, which were fixed upon her.

"No," he answered. "Not lightly at all. It was a horrible thing. I shall never forget it."

She shuddered.

“Nor I,” she said.

Then she added, rather in the tone of one reluctantly making a confession—

“I have not slept easily through one night since.”

“That is very natural,” he returned; “but the feeling will wear away.”

He would have left her then, but she stopped him with a gesture.

“Wait a moment,” she said. “There is something else.”

He paused as she bade him. A slight colour rose to her cheek.

“When I spoke,” she said, “I did not understand at all what had happened—not at all. I was stunned and angry. I thought that if I was too near you, you might have spoken instead of doing as you did.” Then with studied coldness and meeting his gaze fully, “It would have been a vile thing to have said—if I had understood.”

“Yes,” he answered. “It would have been a vile thing, if you had understood; but you did

not, and I realised that when I had time to think over it coolly."

"Then at first," she put it to him, "it made you angry?"

"Yes. I had run some risk, you know, and had had the luck to save your life."

The interview ended here, and it was some time before they met again.

But Murdoch heard of her often; so often indeed that she was kept pretty constantly before him. He heard of her from Haworth, from the Briarleys, from numberless sources.

It became her caprice to make a kind of study of the people around her, and to find entertainment in it. When she drove through the streets of the little town, past the workmen's cottages, and the Works themselves, she was stared at and commented upon. Her beauty, her dress, her manners, roused the beholders either to lavish or grudging acknowledgment. Dirty children sometimes followed her carriage, and on its stopping at any point a small crowd gathered about it.

"She's bin here agen," shouted Granny Dixon



one evening as Murdoch took a seat near her chair.

"Who?" he asked.

"Her. That lass o' Ffrench's—th' one I conna bide. She mak's out she's ta'en a fancy to our Janey. I dunnot believe her," at a louder pitch and with vigorous nods.

"Tha nasty tempert owd body!" cried Mrs. Briarley *sotto voce*. "Get out wi' thee!"

"What art tha sayin'?" demanded her guest. "Dunnot tell me tha wur sayin' nowt. I saw thee."

"I—I wur sayin' it wur a bad day fur th' wash," faltered the criminal, "an' fur them as had rumatiz. How's—how's thine, Misses?"

"Tha'rt tellin' a lee," was the rejoinder. "Tha wert sayin' summat ill o' me. I caught thee at it."

Then going back to the subject and turning to Murdoch:

"I dunnot believe her! She cares nowt fur nowt at th' top o' th' earth but hersen. She set here to-day gettin' 'em to mak' foo's o' theersens because it happent to suit her. She's gotten nowt

better to do an' she wants to pass th' toime—if theer's nowt else at th' back on it. She's Will Ffrench ower agen. She conna mak' a foo' o' me."

"He made foo' enow o' thee i' his day," commented Mrs. Briarley, cautiously.

Granny Dixon favoured her with a sharper glance than before.

"Tha'rt sayin' summat ill agen," she cried. "Howd thy tongue !"

"Eh !" whimpered the poor woman. "A body dare na say theer soul's theer own when hoo's about—hoo's that sharp an' ill-farrant."

A few minutes after, Briarley came in. Janey piloted him, and he entered with a smile at once apologetic and encouraging.

"He wur theer," said Janey. "But he had na had nowt."

Briarley sidled forward and seated himself upon the edge of a chair ; his smile broadened steadily, but he was in a tremendous minority. Granny Dixon transfixed him with her baleful eye, and under its influence the smile graduated from exhilarated friendliness to gravity, from gravity

to gentle melancholy, from melancholy to deepest gloom. But at this stage a happy thought struck him and he beamed again.

“ How — how art tha doin’, Misses ? ” he quavered. “ I hope tha’rt makin’ thyssen comfortable.”

The reception this polite anxiety met with was not encouraging. Granny Dixon’s eye assumed an expression still more baleful.

“ Tha’st been at it agen,” she shouted. “ Tha’st been at it agen. Tha’ll neer git none o’ my brass to spend at th’ ale-house. Mak’ sure o’ that.”

Mr. Briarley turned his attention to the fire again. Melancholy was upon the point of marking him for her own, when the most delicate of tacts came to his rescue.

“ It is na thy brass we want, Misses,” he proclaimed. “ It’s—it’s thy comp’ny.” And then clenched the matter by adding still more feebly, “ Aye, to be sure it’s thy comp’ny, ’is na it, Sararann ? ”

“ Aye,” faltered Mrs. Briarley, “ to be sure.”

“ It’s nowt o’ th’ soart,” answered Granny

Dixon, in the tone of the last trump. "An' dunnot yo' threep me down as it is."

Mr. Briarley's countenance fell. Mrs. Briarley shed a few natural tears under cover of the baby; discretion and delicacy forbade either to retort. Their venerable guest having badgered them into submission, glared at the fire with the air of one who detected its feeble cunning and defied it.

It was Mr. Briarley who first attempted to recover cheerfulness.

"Tha'st had quality to see thee, Sararann," he ventured. "Our Jane tow'd me."

"Aye," answered Mrs. Briarley, tearfully.

Mr. Briarley fell into indiscreet reverie.

"The chap as gets her," he said, "'ll get a han'some lass. I would na moind," modestly, "I would na moind bein' i' his shoes mysen."

Mrs. Briarley's smothered wrongs broke forth.

"Thee!" she cried out. "Tha brazant nowt! I wonder tha'rt na sham't o' thy face—talkin' i' that rood about a lady, an' afore thy own wife! I wonder tha art na sham't."

Mr. Briarley's courage forsook him. He sought refuge in submissive penitence almost lachrymose.

"I did na mean nowt, Sararann," he protested meekly. "It wur a slip o' th' tongue, lass. I'm—I'm not th' build as a young woman o' that soart ud be loike to tak' up wi'."

"Yo' wur good enow fur me onct," replied Mrs. Briarley, sharply. "A noice un yo' are, settin' yore wedded wife below other people—as if she wur dirt."

"Ay, Sararann," the criminal faltered, "I wur good enow fur yo', but—but—yo——"

But at this point he dropped his head upon his hand, shaking it in mournful contrition.

"I'm a poor chap," he said. "I'm nowt but a poor chap as is allus i' trouble. I'm not th' man yo' ought to ha had, Sararann."

"Nay," retorted Mrs. Briarley, "that tha'rt not, an' it's a pity tha did na foind that theer out twelve year ago."

Mr. Briarley shook his head with a still deeper depression.

"Ay, Sararann," he answered, "seems loike it is."

He did not recover himself until Murdoch took

his departure, and then he followed him deprecatingly to the door.

"Does tha think," he asked, "as that theer's true?"

"That what is true?"

"That theer th' chaps has been talkin' ower."

"I don't know," answered Murdoch, "what they have been talking over."

"They're gettin' it goin' among 'em as Haworth's goin' to tak' Ffrench in partner."

Murdoch looked up the road for a few seconds before he replied. He was thinking over the events of the past week.

"I do not think it is true," he said, after this pause. "I don't think it can be. Haworth is not the man to do it."

But the idea was such a startling one, presented in this form, that it gave him a kind of shock; and as he went on his way naturally thinking over the matter, he derived some consolation from repeating aloud his last words:

"No, it is not likely. Haworth is not the man to do it."

## CHAPTER XVII.

## A FLOWER.

BUT at last it was evident that the acquaintance between Haworth and Ffrench had advanced with great rapidity. Ffrench appeared at the Works, on an average, three or four times a week, and it had become a common affair for Haworth to spend an evening with him and his daughter. He was more comfortable in his position of guest in these days. Custom had given him greater ease and self-possession. After two visits he had begun to give himself up to the feverish enjoyment of the hour. His glances were no longer furtive and embarrassed. At times he reached a desperate boldness.

"There's something about her," he said to Murdoch, "that draws a fellow on and holds him off both at the same time. Sometimes I nigh lose my head when I'm with her."

He was moody and resentful at times, but he went again and again, and held his own after a manner. On the occasion of the first dinner Mr. Ffrench gave to his old friends, no small excitement was created by Haworth's presence among the guests. The first man who, entering the room with his wife and daughters, caught sight of his brawny frame and rather dogged face, faltered and grew nervous, and would have turned back if he had possessed the courage to be the first to protest. Everybody else lacked the same courage, it appeared, for nobody did protest openly, though there were comments enough made in private, and as much coldness of manner as good breeding would allow.

Miss Ffrench herself was neither depressed nor ill at ease. It was reluctantly admitted that she had never appeared to greater advantage nor in better spirits.

Before the evening was half over it was evident to all that she was not resenting the presence of her father's new-found friend. She listened to his attempts at conversation with an attentive and suave little smile. If she was amusing her-



self at his expense, she was at the same time amusing herself at the expense of those who looked on, and was delicately defying their opinion.

Jem Haworth went home excited and exultant when all was over. He lay awake through the night, and went down to the Works early.

"I didn't get the worst of it, after all," he said to Murdoch. "Let 'em grin and sert if they will—'them laughs that wins.' She—she never was as handsome in her life as she was last night, and she never treated me as well. She never says much. She only *lets* a fellow come nigh and talk; but she treated me well—in her way."

"I'm going to send for my mother," he said afterward, somewhat shamefacedly. "I'm goin' to begin a straight life; I want naught to stand agen me. And if she's here they'll come to see her. I want all the chances I can get."

He wrote the letter to his mother the same day.

"The old lady will be glad enough to come," he said, when he had finished it. "The finery about her will trouble her a bit at first, but she'll get over it."

His day's work over, Murdoch did not return home at once. His restless habit of taking long rambles across the country had asserted itself with unusual strength of late. He spent little time in the house. To-night he was later than usual. He came in fagged and mud-splashed. Christian was leaving the room as he entered it, but she stopped with her hand upon the door.

"We have had visitors," she said.

"Who?" he asked.

"Mr. Ffrench and his daughter. Mr. Ffrench wanted to see you. *She* did not come in, but sat in the carriage outside."

She shut the door and came back to the hearth.

"She despises us all!" she said. "She despises us all!"

He had flung himself into a chair and lay back, clasping his hands behind his head and looking gloomily before him.

"Sometimes I think she does," he said. "But what of that?"

She answered without looking at him.

"To be sure," she said. "What of that?"

After a little she spoke again.

"There is something I have thought of saying to you," she said. "This is it. I am happier here than I ever was before."

"I am very glad," he answered.

"I never thought of being happy," she went on, "or like other women, in anything. I—I was different."

She said the words with perfect coldness.

"I was different."

"Different!" he echoed absently, and then checked himself. "Don't say that," he said. "Don't think it. It won't do. Why shouldn't you be as good and happy a woman as any who ever lived?"

She remained silent. But her silence only stirred him afresh.

"It is a bad beginning," he said. "I know it is because I have tried it. I have said to myself that I was different from other men, too."

He ended with an impatient movement and a sound half like a groan.

"Here I am," he cried, "telling myself it is better to battle against the strongest feeling of my life because I am 'different'—because there

is a kind of taint in my blood. I don't begin as other men do, by hoping; I begin by despairing, and yet I can't give up. How it will end, God knows!"

"I understand you better than you think," she said.

Something in her voice startled him.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Has my mother—"

He stopped and gazed at her wondering. Some powerful emotion he could not comprehend expressed itself in her face.

"She does not speak of it often," she said. "She thinks of it always."

"Yes," he answered. "I know that. She is afraid. She is haunted by her dread of it—and," his voice dropping, "so am I."

He felt it almost an unnatural thing that he should speak so freely. He had found it rather a difficult thing to accustom himself to her presence in the house; sometimes he had even been repelled by it, and yet, just at this moment, he felt somehow as if they stood upon the same platform and were near each other.

"It will break loose some day," he cried.

"And the day is not far off. I shall run the risk and either win or lose. I fight hard for every day of dull quiet I gain. When I look back over the past I feel that perhaps I am holding a chained devil; but when I look forward I forget, and doubt seems folly."

"In your place," she said, "I would risk my *life* upon it!"

The passion in her voice amazed him. He comprehended even less clearly than before.

"I know what it has cost," she said. "No one better. I am afraid to pass the door of the room where it lies, in the dark. It is like a dead thing always there. Sometimes I fancy it is not alone, and that the door might open and show me some one with it."

"What do you mean?" he said. "You speak as if——"

"You would not understand if I should tell you," she answered a little bitterly. "We are not very good friends—perhaps we never shall be—but I will tell you this again, that in your place I would never give it up—never! I would be true to *him*, if all the world were against me!"

She went away, and shortly afterwards he left the room himself, intending to go up-stairs.

As he reached the bottom of the staircase a light from above fell upon his face and caused him to raise it. The narrow passage itself was dark, but on the topmost stair his mother stood holding a lamp whose light struck upon him. She did not advance, but waited as he came upward, looking down at him, not speaking. Then they passed each other, going their separate ways.

The next day Ffrench appeared in the engine-room itself. He had come to see Murdoch, and having seen him he went away in a most excellent humour.

"What's he after?" inquired Floxham, when he was gone.

"He wants me at his house," said Murdoch. "He says he needs my opinion in some matter."

He went to the house the same evening, and gave his opinion upon the matter in question, and upon several others also. In fact, Mr. Ffrench took possession of him as he had taken

possession of the young man from Manchester, and the Cumberland mechanic, though in this case he had different metal to work upon. He was amiable, generous, and talkative. He exhibited his minerals, his plans for improved factories and workmen's dwelling-houses, his little collection of models which had proved impracticable, and his books on mechanics and manufactures. He was as generous as Haworth himself in the matter of his library; it was at his visitor's service whenever he chose.

As they talked, Rachel Ffrench remained in the room. During the evening she went to the piano, and sitting down, played and sung softly, as if for no other ears than her own. Once, on her father's leaving the room, she turned and spoke to Murdoch.

"You were right in saying I should outlive my terror of what happened to me," she said. "It has almost entirely worn away."

"I am glad," he answered.

She held in her belt a flower like the one which had attracted Granny Dixon's attention. As she crossed the room shortly afterward it fell

upon the floor. She picked it up, but instead of replacing it, laid it carelessly upon the table at Murdoch's side.

After he had risen from his chair, when on the point of leaving, he stood near this table and almost unconsciously took the flower up, and when he went out of the house he held it in his fingers.

The night was dark and his mood was pre-occupied. He scarcely thought of the path before him at all, and on passing through the gate he came without any warning upon a figure standing before it. He drew back and would have spoken had he been given the time.

"Hush," said Haworth's voice. "It's me, lad."

"What are you doing here?" asked Murdoch.  
"Are you going in?"

"No," surlily, "I'm not."

Murdoch said no more. Haworth turned with him and strode along by his side. But he got over his ill-temper sufficiently to speak after a few minutes.

"It's the old tale," he said. "I'm making a



fool of myself. I can't keep away. I was there last night, and to-night the fit came upon me so strong that I was bound to go. But when I got there I'd had time to think it over and I couldn't make up my mind to go in. I knew I'd better give her a rest. What did French want of you?"

Murdoch explained.

"Did you see—her?"

"Yes."

"Well," restlessly, "have you nought to say about her?"

"No," coldly. "What should I have to say of her? It is no business of mine to talk her over."

"You'd talk her over if you were in my place," said Haworth. "You'd be glad enow to do it. You'd think of her night and day, and grow hot and cold at the thought of her. You—you don't know her as I do—if you did——"

They had reached the turn of the lane, and the light of the lamp, which stood there, fell upon them both. Haworth broke off his words and stopped under the blaze. Murdoch saw his face darken with bitter passion.

"Curse you!" he said; "where did you get it?"

Without comprehending him, Murdoch looked down at his own hand at which the man was pointing, and saw in it the flower he had forgotten he held.

"This?" he said, and though he did not know why, the blood leaped to his face.

"Ay," said Haworth. "You know well enough what I mean. Where did you get it? Do you think I don't know the look on it?"

"You may, or you may not," answered Murdoch. "That is nothing to me. I took it up without thinking of it. If I had thought of it I should have left it where it was. I have no right to it—nor you either."

Haworth drew near to him.

"Give it here!" he demanded, hoarsely.

They stood and looked each other in the eye. Externally Murdoch was the calmer of the two, but he held in check a fiercer heat than he had felt for many a day.

"No," he answered, "not I. Think over what you are doing. You will not like to remember it

to-morrow. It is not mine to give nor yours to take. I have done with my share of it—there it is.” And he crushed it in his hand, and flinging it, exhaling its fragrance, upon the ground, turned and went his way. He had not intended to glance backward, but he was not as strong as he thought. He did look backward before he had gone ten yards, and doing so saw Haworth bending down and gathering the bruised petals from the earth.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## "HAWORTH AND CO."

THE next day, when he descended from his gig at the gates, instead of going to his office, Haworth went to the engine-room.

"Leave your work a bit and come into my place," he said to Murdoch. "I want you."

His tone was off-hand but not ill-humoured. There was a hint of embarrassment in it. Murdoch followed him without any words. Having led the way into his office, Haworth shut the door and faced him.

"Can tha guess what I want?" he demanded.

"No," Murdoch answered.

"Well, it's easy told. You said I'd be cooler to-day, and I am. A night gives a man time to face a thing straight. I'd been making a fool of myself before you came up, but I made a bigger fool of myself afterward. There's the end on it."

"I suppose," said Murdoch, "that it was natural enough you should look at the thing differently just then. Perhaps I made a fool of myself too."

"You!" said Haworth, roughly. "You were cool enow."

Later Ffrench came in, and spent an hour with him, and after his departure Haworth made the rounds of the place in one of the worst of his moods.

"Ay," said Floxham to his companion, "that's allus th' road when he shows hissen."

The same day Janey Briarley presented herself to Mr. Ffrench's housekeeper, with a message from her mother. Having delivered the message, she was on her way from the housekeeper's room, when Miss Ffrench, who sat in the drawing-room, spoke through the open door to the servant.

"If that is the child," she said, "bring her here to me."

Janey entered the great room, awe-stricken and overpowered by its grandeur. Miss Ffrench, who sat near the fire, addressed her, turning her head over her shoulder.

"Come here," she commanded.

Janey advanced with something approaching tremor. Miss Ffrench was awe-inspiring anywhere, but Miss Ffrench amid the marvels of her own drawing-room, leaning back in her chair and regarding her confusion with a suggestion of friendly notice, was terrible.

"Sit down," she said, "and talk to me."

But here the practical mind rebelled and asserted itself, in spite of abasement of spirit.

"I hav'n't gotten nowt to talk about," said Janey, stoutly. "What mun I say?"

"Anything you like," responded Miss Ffrench. "I am not particular. There's a chair."

Janey seated herself in it. It was a big one, in which her small form was lost; and her parcel was a big one, but Miss Ffrench did not tell her to put it down, so she held it on her knee and was almost hidden behind it. In fact, she presented somewhat the appearance of a huge newspaper package, clasped by arms and surmounted by a small, sharp face and an immense bonnet, and with a curious appendage of short legs and big shoes.

"I dunnot see," the girl was saying mentally, and with some distaste for her position, "what she wants wi' me."

But as she stared over the top of her parcel, she gradually softened. The child found Miss Ffrench well worth looking at.

"Eh!" she announced, with admiring candour. "Eh! but tha art han'some!"

"Am I?" said Rachel Ffrench. "Thank you."

"Ay," answered Janey, "tha art. I nivver seed no lady loike thee afore, let alone a young woman. I've said so mony a toime to Mester Murdoch."

"Have you?"

"Ay, I'm allus talkin' to him about thee."

"That's kind," said Rachel Ffrench. "I dare say he enjoys it. Who is he?"

"Him!" exclaimed Janey. "Dost na tha know him? Him as was at our house th' day yo' coom th' first toime. Him as dragged thee out o' th' engine."

"Oh!" said Miss Ffrench, "the engineer."

"Ay," in a tone of some discomfiture. "He's

a engineer, but he's na th' common workin' soart. Granny Dixon says he's gotten gentlefolks' ways."

"I should think," remarked Miss Ffrench, "that Mrs. Dixon knew."

"Ay, she's used to gentlefolk. They've takken notice on her i' her young days. She knowed thy grandfeyther."

"She gave me to understand as much," responded Miss Ffrench, smiling pleasantly at the recollection this brought to her mind.

"Yo' see mother an' me thinks a deal o' Mester Murdoch, because he is na one o' th' drinkin' soart," proceeded Janey. "He's th' steady koind as is fond o' books, an' th' loike. He does na mak' much at his trade, but he knows more than yo'd think for, to look at him."

"That is good news," said Miss Ffrench, cheerfully.

Janey rested her chin upon her parcel, warming to the subject.

"I should na wonder if he gotten to be a rich mon some o' these days," she went on. "He's gotten th' makin's on it in him, if he has th' luck



an' looks sharp about him. I off'n tell him he mun look sharp."

She became so communicative indeed, that Miss Ffrench found herself well entertained. She heard the details of Haworth's history, the reports of his prosperity and growing wealth, the comments his hands had made upon herself, and much interesting news concerning the religious condition of Broxton and "th' chapel."

It was growing dusk when the interview ended, and when she went away Janey carried an additional bundle.

"Does tha allus dress i' this road?" she had asked her hostess, and the question had suggested to Miss Ffrench a whimsical idea. She took the child up-stairs and gave her maid orders to produce all the cast-off finery she could find, and then she had stood by and looked on as Janey made her choice.

"She stood theer laughin' while I picked th' things out," said Janey afterward. "I dunnot know what she wur laughin' at. Yo' nivver know whether she's makin' game on you or not."

"I dunnot see as theer wur owt to laugh at," said Mrs. Briarley, indignantly.

"Nay," said Janey, "nor me neyther; but she does na laugh when theer's owt to laugh at—that's th' queer part o' it. She said as I could ha' more things when I coom agen. I would na go if it wur na fur that."

Even his hands found out at this time that Haworth was ill at ease. His worst side showed itself in his intercourse with them. He was overbearing and difficult to please. He found fault and lost his temper over trifles, and showed a restless, angry desire to assert himself.

"I'll show you who's master here, my lads," he would say. "I'll ha' no dodges. It's Haworth that's th' head o' this concern. Whoever comes in or out, this here's 'Haworth's.' Clap that i' your pipes and smoke it."

"Summat's up," said Floxham. "Summat's up. Mark yo' that."

Murdoch looked on with no inconsiderable anxiety. The intercourse between himself and Haworth had been broken in upon. It had received its first check months before, and in

these days neither was in the exact mood for a renewal of it. Haworth wore a forbidding air. His rough good-fellowship was a thing of the past. He made no more boisterous jokes, no more loud boasts. At times his silence was almost morose. He was not over civil even to Ffrench, who came oftener than ever, and whose manner was cheerful to buoyancy.

Matters had remained in this condition for a couple of months, when, on his way home late one night, Murdoch’s attention was arrested by the fact that a light burned in the room used by the master of the Works as his office.

He stopped in the road to look up at it. He could scarcely, at first, believe the evidence of his senses. The place had been closed and locked hours before when Haworth had left it with Ffrench, with whom he was to dine. It was nearly midnight, and certainly an unlawful hour for such a light to show itself, but there it burned steadily amid the darkness of the night.

“ It doesn’t seem likely that those who had reason to conceal themselves would set a light

blazing," Murdoch thought. "But if there's mischief at work there's no time to waste."

There was only one thing to do, and he did it, making the best of his way to the spot.

The gate was thrown open, and the door of entrance yielded to his hand. Inside, the darkness was profound, but when he found the passage leading to Haworth's room, he saw the door was ajar and the light still burned. On reaching this door he stopped short. There was no need for his going in. It was Haworth himself who was in the room—Haworth, who laid with arms folded on the table, and his head resting upon them.

Murdoch turned away, and as he did so the man heard him for the first time. He lifted his head and looked round, speaking loudly.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

There was no help for it. Murdoch pushed the door open and stood before him.

"Murdoch," he said. "I saw the light, and it brought me up."

Haworth gave him a grudging look.

"Come in," he said.

"Do you want me?" Murdoch asked.

"Ay," he answered, dully, "I think I do."

Murdoch stood and looked at him. He did not sit down. A mysterious sense of embarrassment held him in check.

"What is wrong?" he asked, in a lowered voice. He hardly knew it for his own.

"Wrong?" echoed Haworth. "Naught. I've—been taking leave of the place—that's all."

"Yo' have been doing *what*?" said Murdoch.

"Taking leave of the place. I've given it up."

His visitor uttered a passionate ejaculation.

"You are mad!" he said.

"Ay," bitterly. "Mad enow."

The next instant a strange sound burst from him,—a terrible sound, forced back at its birth. His struggle to suppress it shook him from head to foot; his hands clenched themselves as if each were a vice. Murdoch turned aside.

When it was over, and the man raised his face, he was trembling still, and white with a kind of raging shame.

"Blast you!" he cried, "if there's ever aught

in your face that minds me o' this, I'll—I'll kill you!"

This Murdoch did not answer at all. There was enough to say.

"You are going to share it with Ffrench?" he said.

"Ay, with that fool. He's been at me from th' start. Naught would do him but he must have his try at it. Let him. He shall play second fiddle, by the Lord Harry!"

He began plucking at some torn scraps of paper, and did not let them rest while he spoke.

"I've been over th' place from top to bottom," he said. I held out until to-night. To-night I give in, and as soon as I left 'em I came here. Ten minutes after it was done I'd have undone it if I could—I'd have undone it. But it's done, and there's an end on it."

He threw the scraps of paper aside and clenched his hand, speaking through his teeth.

"She's never given me a word to hang on," he said, "and I've done it for her. I've give up what I worked for and boasted on, just to be brought nigher to her. She knows I've done it,

—she *knows* it, though she's never owned it by a look,—and I'll make that enough."

"If you make your way with her," said Murdoch, "you have earned all you won."

"Ay," was the grim answer. "I've earned it."

And soon after the light in the window went out, and they parted outside and went their separate ways in the dark.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

BEFORE the week's end, all Broxton had heard the news. In the Works, before and after working hours, groups gathered together to talk it over. Haworth was going to "tak' Ffrench in partner." It was hard to believe it, and the general opinion expressed was neither favourable nor complimentary. "Haworth and Ffrench!" said Floxham, in sarcastic mood. "Haworth and Co.,—an' a noice chap Co. is to ha' i' a place. We'n ha' patent silver-mounted back-action puddlin'-rakes afore long, lans, if Co. gets his way."

Upon the occasion of the installation of the new partner, however, there was a natural tendency to conviviality. Not that the ceremony in question was attended with any special manifestation on the part of the individuals most concerned. Ffrench's appearance at the Works



was its chief feature, but, the day's labour being at an end, several gentlemen engaged in the various departments, scorning to neglect an opportunity, retired to the "Who'd 'a' Thowt it?" and promptly rendered themselves insensible through the medium of beer, assisted by patriotic and somewhat involved speeches.

Mr. Briarley, returning to the bosom of his family at a late hour, sat down by his fireside and wept copiously.

"I'm a poor chap, Sararann," he remarked. "I shall ne'er get took in partner by nobody. I'm not i' luck loike some—an' I nivver wur, 'ceptin' when I gotten thee."

"If tha'd keep thy nose out o' th' beer-mug tha'd do well enow," said Mrs. Briarley.

But this did not dispel Mr. Briarley's despondency. He only wept afresh.

"Nay, Sararann," he said, "it is na beer, it's misforchin. I allus wur misforchnit — 'ceptin' when I gotten thee."

"Things is i' a bad way," he proceeded, afterward. "Things is i' a bad way. I nivver seed 'em i' th' reet leet till I heerd Foxy Gibbs mak'

his speech to-neet. Th' more beer he gotten th' elyquenter he wur. Theer'll be trouble wi' th' backbone an' sinoo, if theer is na summat done."

"What art tha drivin' at?" fretted his wife.

"I canna mak' no sense out o' thee."

"Canna tha?" he responded. "Canna thee, Sararann? Well, I dunnot wonder. It wur a good bit afore I straightened it out mysen. Happen I hannot gotten things as they mout be yet. Theer wur a good deal o' talk an' a good deal o' beer, and a man as has been misforchnit is loike to be slow."

After which he fell into a deep and untroubled slumber, and it being found impossible to rouse him, he spent the remainder of the night in Granny Dixon's chair by the fire, occasionally startling the echoes of the silent room by a loud and encouraging "Eer-eer!"

During the following two weeks, Haworth did not go to the Ffrenchs'. He spent his nights at his own house in dull and sullen mood. At the Works he kept his word as regarded Ffrench. That gentleman's lines had scarcely fallen in pleasant places. His partner was gruff and

authoritative, and not given to enthusiasm. There were times when only his own good-breeding preserved the outward smoothness of affairs.

"But," he said to his daughter, "one does not expect good manners of a man like that. They are not his *forte*."

At the end of the two weeks there came one afternoon a message to Haworth in his room. Murdoch was with him when it arrived. He read it, and, crushing it in his hand, threw it into the fire.

"They're a nice lot," he said, with a short laugh, "coming down on a fellow like that."

And then an oath broke from him.

"I've give up two or three things," he said, "and they're among 'em. It's th' last time, and——"

He took down his overcoat and began to put it on.

"Tell 'em," he said to Murdoch as he went out, —"tell 'em I'm gone home, and sha'n't be back till morning. Keep the rest to yourself."

He went out, shutting the door with a bang.

Murdoch stood at the window and watched him drive away in his gig.

He was scarcely out of sight before a carriage appeared, moving at a very moderate pace. It was a bright though cold day, and the top of the carriage was thrown back, giving the occupant the benefit of the sunshine. The occupant in question was Rachel Ffrench, who looked up and bestowed upon the figure at the window a slight gesture of recognition.

Murdoch turned away with an impatient movement after she had passed. "Pooh!" he said, angrily. "He's a fool."

By midnight of the same day Haworth had had time to half forget his scruples. He had said to his visitors what he had said to Murdoch, with his usual frankness.

"It's the last time. We've done with each other after this, you know. It's the last time. Make the most on it."

There was a kind of desperate exultation in his humour. If he had dared, he would have liked to fling aside every barrier of restraint and show himself at his worst, defying the world; but fear

held him in check, as nothing else would have done,—an abject fear of consequences.

By midnight the festivities were at their height. He himself was boisterous with wine and excitement. He had stood up at the head of his table and made a blatant speech and roared a loud song, and had been laughed at and applauded.

"Make the most on it," he kept saying. "It'll be over by cock-crow. It's a bit like a chap's funeral."

He had just seated himself after this, and was pouring out a great glass of wine, when a servant entered the room and spoke to him in a low tone.

"A lady, sir, as come in a cab, and——" And then the door opened again, and every one turned to look at the woman who stood upon the threshold. She was a small woman, dressed in plain country fashion ; she had white hair, and a fresh bloom on her cheeks, and her eyes were bright with timorous excitement and joy.

"Jem," she faltered, "it's me, my dear."

Haworth stared at her as if stunned. At first his brain was not clear enough to take in the

meaning of her presence, but as she approached him and laid her basket down and took his hand, the truth revealed itself to him.

"It's me, my dear," she repeated, "accordin' to promise. I didn't know you had comp'ny."

She turned to those who sat about the table and made a little rustic courtesy. A dead calm seemed to take possession of one and all. They did not glance at each other, but looked at her as she stood by Haworth, holding his hand, waiting for him to kiss her.

"He's so took by surprise," she said, "he doesn't know what to say. He wasn't expecting me so soon," laughing proudly. "That's it. I'm his mother, ladies and gentlemen."

Haworth made a sign to the servant who waited.

"Bring a plate here," he said. "She'll sit down with us."

The order was obeyed, and she sat down at his right hand, fluttered and beaming.

"You're very good not to mind me," she said. "I didn't think of there bein' comp'ny—and gentry, too."

She turned to a brightly-dressed girl at her side and spoke to her.

"He's my only son, Miss, and me a widder, an' he's allers been just what you see him now. He was good from the time he was an infant. He's been a pride an' a comfort to me since the day he were born."

The girl stared at her with a look which was almost a look of fear. She answered her in a hushed voice.

"Yes, ma'am," she said.

"Yes, Miss," happily. "There's not many mothers as can say what I can. He's never been ashamed of me, hasn't Jem. If I'd have been a lady born, he couldn't have showed me more respect than he has, nor been more kinder."

The girl did not answer this time. She looked down at her plate, and her hand trembled as she pretended to occupy herself with the fruit upon it. Then she stole a glance at the rest,—a glance at once guilty, and defiant of the smile she expected to see. But the smile was not there.

The only smile to be seen was upon the face of

the little countrywoman who regarded them all with innocent reverence, and was in such bright good spirits that she did not even notice their silence.

"I've had a long journey," she said, "an' I've been pretty flustered, through not bein' used to travel. I don't know how I'd have borne up at first—bein' flustered so—if it hadn't been for everybody bein' so good to me. I'd mention my son when I had to ask anything, an' they'd smile as good-natured as could be, an' tell me in a minute."

The multiplicity of new dishes and rare wines bewildered her, but she sat through the repast simple and unashamed.

"There's some as wouldn't like me bein' so ignorant," she said, "but Jem doesn't mind."

The subject of her son's virtues was an inexhaustible one. The silence about her only gave her courage and eloquence. His childish strength and precocity, his bravery, his good temper, his generous ways, were her themes.

"He come to me in time of trouble," she said,



"an' he made it lighter—an' he's been makin' it lighter ever since. Who'd have thought that a simple body like me would ever have a grand home like this—and it earned and bought by my own son? I beg your pardon, ladies and gentlemen," looking round with happy tears. "I didn't go to do it, an' there's no reason for it, except me bein' took a little by surprise through not bein' exactly prepared for such a grand place an' gentlefolk's comp'ny, as is so good an' understands a mother's feelin's."

When the repast was at an end, she got up and made her little courtesy to them all again. If the gentlefolk would excuse her, she would bid them good-night. She was tired and not used to late hours.

To the girl who had sat at her side she gave an admiring smile of farewell.

"You're very pretty, my dear," she said, "if I may take the liberty, bein' an old woman. Good-night! God bless you!"

When she was gone, the girl lay forward, her face hidden upon her arms on the table. For a few seconds no one spoke; then Haworth looked

up from his plate, on which he had kept his eyes fixed, and broke the stillness.

“If there’d been a fellow among you that had dared to show his teeth,” he said, “I’d have wrung his accursed neck!”

## CHAPTER XX.

## MISS FRENCH MAKES A CALL.

THE following Sunday morning, the congregation of Broxton Chapel was thrown into a state of repressed excitement. Haworth’s carriage, with a couple of servants, brought his mother to enjoy Brother Hicks’s eloquence. To the presence of the carriage and servants Haworth had held firm. Upon the whole, he would have preferred that she should have presented herself at the door of Broxton Old Church, which was under the patronage of the county families and honoured by their presence; but the little woman had exhibited such uneasiness at his unfolding his plan of securing the largest and handsomest pew for her that he had yielded the point.

“I’ve always been a chapel-goin’ woman, Jem,” she had said, “an’ I wouldn’t like to change. An’ I should feel freer where there’s not so many gentlefolk.”

The carriage and the attending servants she had submitted to with simple obedience. There were no rented pews in Broxton Chapel, and she took her seat among the rest, innocently unconscious of the sensation her appearance had created. Every matron of the place had had time to learn who she was, and to be filled with curiosity concerning her.

Janey Briarley, by whose side she chanced to sit, knew more than all the rest, and took her under her protection at once.

"Tha'st gotten th' wrong hymn-book," she whispered audibly, having glanced at the volume the servant handed to her. "We dunnot use Wesley aw th' toime. We use Mester Hixon's 'Songs o' Grace.' Tha can look on wi' me."

Her delicate attentions and experience quite won Dame Haworth's motherly heart. "I never see a sharper little thing," she said, admiringly, afterward, "nor a old-fashioneder. There wasn't a tex' as she didn't find immediate, nor yet a hymn."

"Bless us!" said Mrs. Briarley, laboriously lugging the baby homeward. "And to think o'

her bein’ th’ mistress o’ that big house, wi’ aw them chaps i’ livery at her beck an’ call. Why, she’s nowt but a common body, Jane Ann. She thanked thee as simple as any other woman mought ha’ done! She’s noan quality. She’d gotten a silk gown on, but it wur a black un, an’ not so mich as a feather i’ her bonnet. I’d ha’ had a feather, if I’d ha’ been her—a feather sets a body off. But that’s allus th’ road wi’ folk as has brass—they nivver know how to spend it.”

“Nay,” said Janey, “she is na quality; but she’s gotten a noice way wi’ her. Haworth is na quality hissen.”

“She wur a noice-spoken owd body,” commented Mrs. Briarley. “Seemt loike she took a fancy to thee.”

Janey turned the matter over mentally, with serious thrift.

“I should na moind it if she did,” she replied. “She’ll ha’ plenty to gi’ away.”

It was not long before they knew her well. She was a cheerful and neighbourly little soul, and through the years of her prosperity had been given to busy and kindly charities.

In her steadfast and loving determination to please her son, she gave up her rustic habit of waiting upon herself, and wore her best gown every day in spite of pangs of conscience. She rode instead of walked, and made courageous efforts to become accustomed to the size and magnificence of the big rooms, but notwithstanding her faithfulness, she was a little restless.

"Not bein' used to it," she said, "I get a little lonesome or so—sometimes, though not often, my dear."

She had plenty of time to feel at a loss. Her leisure was not occupied by visitors. Broxton discussed her and smiled at her rather good-naturedly than otherwise. It was not possible to suspect her of any ill, but it was scarcely to be anticipated that people would go to see her. One person came, however, facing public opinion with her usual calmness—Rachel Ffrench, who presented herself one day and made her a rather long call.

On hearing her name announced, the little woman rose tremulously. She was tremulous because she was afraid that she could not play

her part as mistress of her son's household to his honour. When Miss Ffrench advanced, holding out her gloved hand, she gave her a startled upward glance and dropped a little courtesy.

For a moment, she forgot to ask her to be seated. When she recollected herself, and they sat down opposite to each other, she could at first only look at her visitor in silence.

But Miss Ffrench was wholly at ease. She enjoyed the rapturous wonder she had excited with all her heart. She was very glad she had come.

"It must be very pleasant for Mr. Haworth to have you here," she said.

The woman started. A flush of joy rose upon her withered face. Her comprehension of her son's prosperity had been a limited one. Somehow she had never thought of this. Here was a beautiful, high-bred woman to whom he must be in a manner near, since she spoke of him in this way—as if he had been a gentleman born.

"Jem?" she faltered, innocently. "Yes, ma'am. I hope so. He's—he's told me so."

Then she added, in some hurry:

“Not that I can be much comp’ny to him—it isn’t that; if he hadn’t been what he is, and had the friends he has, I couldn’t be much comp’ny for him. An’ as it is, it’s not likely he can need a old woman as much as his goodness makes him say he does.”

Rachel Ffrench regarded her with interest.

“He is very good,” she remarked, “and has a great many friends I dare say. My father admires him greatly.”

“Thank you, ma’am,” brightly, “though there’s no one could help it. His goodness to me is more than I can tell, an’ it’s no wonder that others sees it in him an’ is fond of him accordin’.”

“No, it’s no wonder,” in a tone of gentle encouragement.

The flush upon the withered cheek deepened, and the old eyes lit up.

“He’s thirty-two year old, Miss,” said the loving creature, “an’ the time’s to come yet when he’s done a wrong or said a harsh word. He was honest an’ good as a child, an’ he’s honest and good as a man. His old mother can say it from the bottom of her full heart.”



"It's a very pleasant thing to be able to say," remarked her visitor.

"It's the grateful pride of my life that I can say it," with fresh tenderness. "An' to think that prosperity goes with it too. I've said to myself that I wasn't worthy of it, because I couldn't never be grateful enough. He might have been prosperous, and not what he is. Many a better woman than me has had that grief to bear, an' I've been spared it."

When Miss Ffrench returned to her carriage she wore a reflective look. When she had seated herself comfortably, she spoke aloud :

"No, there are ten chances to one that she will never see the other side at all. There is not a man or woman in Broxton who would dare to tell her. I would not do it myself."

When Haworth returned at night he heard the particulars of the visit, as he had known he should when Ffrench had told him that it was his daughter's intention to call that day.

"The beautifulest young lady my old eyes ever saw, my dear," his mother said again and again.

“And to think of her coming to see me, as if I’d been a lady like herself.”

Haworth spoke but little. He seldom said much in these days. He sat at the table drinking his after-dinner wine, and putting a question now and then.

“What did she say?” he asked.

She stopped to think.

“P’raps it was me that said most,” she answered, “though I didn’t think so then. She asked a question or so an’ seemed to like to listen. I was tellin’ her what a son you’d been to me, an’ how happy I was an’ how thankful I was.”

“She’s not one that says much,” he said, without looking up from the glass on which his eyes had been fixed. “That’s her way.”

She replied with a question put timidly.

“You’ve knowed her a good bit, I dare say, my dear?”

“No,” uneasily. “A six-month or so, that’s all.”

“But it’s been long enough for her to find out that what I said to her was true. I didn’t tell her what was new to her, my dear. I see that by

her smile, an’ the kind way she listened. She’s got a beautiful smile, Jem, an’ a beautiful sweet face.”

When they parted for the night, he drew from his pocket a bank-note and handed it to her.

“I’ve been thinking,” he said, awkwardly, “that it would be in your line to give summat now and then to some o’ the poor lot that’s so thick here. There’s plenty on ’em, an’ p’raps it wouldn’t be a bad thing. There’s not many that’s fond of givin’. Let’s set the gentry a fashion.”

“Jem!” she said. “My dear! there isn’t nothin’ that would make me no happier—nothin’ in the world.”

“It won’t do overmuch good, maybe,” he returned. “More than half on ’em don’t deserve it, but give it to ’em if you’ve a fancy for it. I don’t grudge it.”

There were tears of joy in her eyes. She took his hand and held it, fondling it.

“I might have knowed it,” she said, “an’ I don’t deserve it for holdin’ back an’ feelin’ a bit timid, as I have done. I’ve thought of it again and again, when I’ve been a trifle lonesome with

you away. There's many a poor woman as is hard worked that I might help, and children too, maybe, me bein' so fond of 'em."

She drew nearer still and laid her hand on his arm.

"I always was fond of 'em," she said, "always—an' I've thought that, sometimes, my dear, there might be little things here as I might help to care for, an' as would be fond of me."

"If there was children," she went on, "I should get used to it quick. They'd take away the—the bigness, an' make me forget it."

But he did not answer nor look at her, though she felt his arm tremble.

"I think they'd be fond of me," she said, "them an'—an' her too, whomsoever she might be. She'd be a lady, Jem, but she wouldn't mind my ways, I dare say, an' I'd do my best with all my heart. I'd welcome her, an' give up my place here to her, joyful. It's a place fitter for a lady such as she would be—God bless her—than for me." And she patted his sleeve and bent her face that she might kiss his hand.

## CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH MRS. BRIARLEY'S POSITION IS  
DELICATE.

So the poor and hard-worked of the town came to know her well, and it must also be confessed that others less deserving learned to know her also, and proceeded, with much thrift and dexterity, to make hay while the sun shone. Haworth held to his bargain, even going to the length of lavishness.

"Haworth gives it to her?" was said with marked incredibility at the outset. "Nay, lad, tha canna mak' me believe that."

Mrs. Haworth's earliest visit was made to the Briarley cottage. She came attired in her simplest gown, the week after her appearance at the Chapel, and her entrance into the household created such an excitement as somewhat disturbed her. The children were scattered with wild

hustling and scurry, Janey dragged off her apron in the temporary seclusion offered by the door. Mrs. Briarley, wiping the soap-suds from her arms, hurried forward with apologetic nervousness. She dropped a courtesy, scarcely knowing what words of welcome would be appropriate for the occasion, and secretly speculating on possible results.

But her visitor's demeanour was not overpowering. She dropped a courtesy herself—a kindly and rustic obeisance. She even looked somewhat timid.

“I’m Mr. Haworth’s mother, ma’am,” she faltered, “an’—an’ thank you kindly,” taking the seat offered. “Don’t put yourself out, ma’am, for me. There wasn’t no need to send the children away,—not at all, me bein’ partial to ’em an’ also used.”

The next instant she gave a timid start.

“Gi’ me my best cap!” cried a stentorian voice. “Gi’ me my best cap! Wheer is it? Gi’ me my best cap!”

Granny Dixon’s high basket-backed chair had been placed in the shadow of the chimney-corner

for her better enjoyment of her midday nap, and, suddenly aroused by some unknown cause, she had promptly become conscious of the presence of a visitor and the dire need of some addition to her toilet. She sat up, her small-boned figure trembling with wrath, her large eye shining.

"Gi' me my best cap!" she demanded. "Gi' it me!"

Mrs. Briarley disappeared into the adjacent room, and came out with the article required in her hand. It was a smart cap, with a lace border and blue bows on it.

"Put it on!" shouted Mrs. Dixon. "And put it on *straight*!"

Mrs. Briarley obeyed nervously.

"She's my mester's grandmother," she explained, plaintively. "Yo' munnot moind her, missus."

Granny Dixon fixed her eyes upon the stranger.

"She gotten it," she proclaimed. "I did na. I'd nivver ha' bowt th' thing i' th' world. Blue nivver wur becomin' to me. She gotten it. She nivver had no taste."

"Ay," said Mrs. Briarley, "I did get it fur thee, tha nasty owd piece, but tha'lt nivver catch me at th' loike agen—givin' thee presents, when I hannot a bit o' finery to my name."

"It allus set me off—red did," cried Mrs. Dixon. "It wur my fav'rite colour when I wur a lass,—and I wur a good-lookin' lass, too, seventy year ago."

"I'm sure you was, ma'am," responded Mrs. Haworth. "I've no doubt on it."

"She canna hear thee," said Mrs. Briarley. "She's as deaf as a post—th' ill-tempert owd besom," and proceeded to give a free translation at the top of her lungs.

"She says tha mun ha' been han'some. She says onybody could see that to look at thee."

"Ay," sharply. "She's reet, too. I wur, seventy year ago. Who is she?"

"She's Mester Haworth's mother."

"Mester Haworth's mother?" promptly.  
"Did na tha tell me he wur a rich mon?"

"Ay, I did."

"Well, then, what does she dress i' that road



fur? She's noan quality. She does na look much better nor thee."

"Eh! bless us!" protested Mrs. Briarley.  
"What's a body to do wi' her?"

"Don't mind her, ma'am," said Mrs. Haworth.  
"It don't do no harm. A old person's often sing'lar. It don't trouble me."

Then Janey, issuing from her retirement in comparatively full dress, was presented with due ceremony.

"It wur her as fun thy place i' th' hymn-book," said Mrs. Briarley. "She's a good bit o' help to me, is Jane Ann."

It seemed an easy thing afterward to pour forth her troubles, and she found herself so far encouraged by her visitor's naïve friendliness that she was even more eloquent than usual.

"Theer's trouble ivvery wheer," she said, "an' I dare say tha has thy share, missus, fur aw thy brass."

Politeness forbade a more definite reference to the "goin's-on" which had called forth so much virtuous indignation on the part of the Broxton matrons. She felt it but hospitable to wait

until her guest told her own story of tribulation.

But Mrs. Haworth sat smiling placidly.

"I've seen it in my day," she said; "an' it were heavy enough too, my dear, an' seemed heavier than it were, p'r'aps, through me bein' a young thing an' helpless, but I should be a ungrateful woman if I didn't try to forget now as it had ever been. A woman as has such a son as I have—one that's prospered an' lived a pure, good life, an' never done a wilful wrong, an' has won friends an' respect everywhere — has enough happiness to help her forget troubles that's past an' gone."

Mrs. Briarley stopped half-way to the ground in the act of picking up Granny Dixon's discarded head-gear. Her eyes were wide open, her jaw fell a little. But her visitor went on without noticing her.

"Though for the matter of that," she said, "I dare say there's not one on you as doesn't know his ways, an' couldn't tell me of some of his goodness as I should never find out from him."

"Wheer art tha puttin' my cap?" shouted

Granny Dixon. "What art tha doin' wi' my cap? Does tha think because I've got a bit o' brass, I can hot th' bake-oven wi' head-dresses?"

Mrs. Briarley had picked up the cap, and was only rescued by this timely warning from the fatal imprudence of putting it in the fire and stirring it violently with the poker.

"Art tha dazedder than common?" shrieked the old woman. "Has tha gone daft? What art tha starin' at?"

"I am na starin' at nowt," said Mrs. Briarley, with a start. "I—I wur hearkenin' to the lady, an' I did na think o' what I wur doin'."

She did not fully recover herself during the whole of her visitor's stay, and, in fact, several times lapsed into the same meditative condition. When Haworth's charitable intentions were made known to her, she stopped jolting the baby and sat in wild confusion.

"Did tha say as he wur goin' to gi' thee money?" she exclaimed,—“money to gi' away?"

"He said he'd give it without a grudge," said his mother, proudly. "Without a grudge if it pleased me. That's his way, my dear. It were

his way from the time he were a boy, an' worked so hard to give me a comfortable home. He give it, he said, without a grudge."

"Jane Ann," said Mrs. Briarley, standing at the door to watch her out of sight,—“Jane Ann, what dost tha think o' that theer?”

She said it helplessly, clutching at the child on her hip with a despairing grasp.

“Did tha hear her?” she demanded. “She wur talkin' o' Haworth, an' she wur pridin' hersen on th' son he'd been to her, an'—an' th' way he'd lived. Th' cold sweat broke out aw over me. No wonder I wur fur puttin' th' cap i' th' fire. Lord ha' mercy on us!”

But Janey regarded the matter from a more practical stand-point.

“He has na treated *her* ill,” she said. “Happen he is na so bad after aw. Did tha hear what she said about th' money?”

## CHAPTER XXII.

## AGAIN.

“THEER’s a chap,” it was said of Murdoch with some disdain among the malcontents,—“theer’s a chap as coom here to work for his fifteen bob a week, an’ now he’s hand i’ glove wi’ th’ mesters an’s gotten a shop o’ his own.”

The “shop” in question had, however, been only a very simple result of circumstances. In times of emergency it had been discovered that “th’ ’Merican chap” was an individual of resources. Floxham had discovered this early, and, afterward, the heads of other departments. If a machine or tool was out of order, “Tak’ it to th’ ’Merican chap an’ he’ll fettle it,” said one or another. And the time had never been when the necessary “fettling” had not been accomplished. In his few leisure moments, Murdoch would go from room to room, asking questions or

looking on in silence at the work being carried on. Often his apparently haphazard and desultory examinations finally resulted in some suggestion which simplified things astonishingly. He had a fancy for simplifying and improving the appliances he saw in use, and this, too, without any waste of words.

But gradually rough models of these trifles, and hastily-made drawings collected in the corner of the common work-room which had fallen to Murdoch, and Haworth's attention was drawn towards them.

"What wi' moddles o' this, an' moddles o' that," Floxham remarked, "we'll ha' to mak' a flittin' afore long. Theer'll be no room fur us nor th' engines neyther."

Haworth turned to the things and looked them over one by one, touching some of them dubiously, some carelessly, some without much comprehension.

"Look here," he said to Murdoch, "there's a room nigh mine that's not in use. I don't like to be at close quarters with every chap, but you can bring your traps up there. It'll be a place

to stow 'em an' do your bits o' jobs when you're in the humour."

The same day the change was made, and before leaving the Works, Haworth came in to look around. Throwing himself into a chair, he glanced about him with a touch of curiosity.

"They're all your own notions, these?" he said.

Murdoch assented.

"They are of not much consequence," he answered. "They are only odds and ends that fell into my hands somehow when they needed attention. I like that kind of work, you know."

"Ay," responded Haworth, "I dare say. But most chaps would have had more to say about doin' 'em than you have."

Not long after Ffrench's advent a change was made.

"If you'll give up your old job, and take to looking sharp after the machinery and keeping the chaps that run it up to their work," said Haworth, "you can do it. It'll be a better shop than the other and give you more time. And it'll be a saving to the place in the end."

So the small room containing his nondescript collection became his head-quarters, and Murdoch's position was a more responsible one. He found plenty of work, but he had more time, as Haworth had prophesied, and he had also more liberty.

"Yo're getten on," said Janey Briarley. "Yo're getten more wage an' less work, an' yo're one o' th' mesters, i' th' way. Yo' go wi' th' gentlefolk a good bit, too. Feyther says Ffrench mak's hissen as thick wi' yo' as if yo' wur a gentleman yorsen. Yo' had yo're supper up theer last neet. Did she set i' th' room an' talk wi' yo'?"

"Yes," he answered. It was not necessary to explain who "she" was.

"Well," said Janey, "she would na do that if she did na think more o' yo' nor if yo' were a common chap. She's pretty grand i' her ways. What did yo' talk about?"

"It would be hard to tell now," he replied. "We talked of several things."

"Ay, but what I wanted to know wur whether she talked to thee loike she'd talk to a



gentleman,—whether she made free wi' thee or not."

"I have never seen her talk to a gentleman," he said.

"How does she talk to Haworth?"

"I have never seen her talk to him either. We have never been there at the same time."

This was true. It had somehow chanced that they had never met at the house. Perhaps Rachel Ffrench knew why. She had found Broxton dull enough to give her an interest in any novelty of emotion or experience. She disliked the ugly town, with its hard-worked and unpicturesque people. She hated the quiet, well-regulated, well-bred county families with candour and vivacity. She had no hesitation in announcing her distaste and weariness.

"I detest them all," she once said calmly to Murdoch. "I detest them."

She made the best of the opportunities for enlivenment which lay within her grasp. She was not averse to Haworth's presenting himself again and again, sitting in restless misery in the room with her, watching her every movement,

drinking in her voice, struggling to hold himself in check, and failing and growing sullen and silent, and going away, carrying his wretchedness with him. She never encouraged him to advance by any word or look, but he always returned again, to go through the same self-torture and humiliation, and she always knew he would. She even derived some unexciting entertainment from her father's plans for the future. He had already new methods and processes to discuss. He had a fancy for establishing a bank in the town, and argued the advisability of the scheme with much fervour and brilliancy. Without a bank in which the "hands" could deposit their earnings, and which should make the town a sort of centre, and add importance to its business ventures, Broxton was nothing.

The place was growing, and the people of the surrounding villages were drawn towards it when they had business to transact. They were beginning to buy and sell in its market, and to look to its increasing population for support. The farmers would deposit their funds, the shopkeepers theirs, the "hands" would follow their example,

and in all likelihood it would prove, in the end, a gigantic success.

Haworth met his enthusiasms with stolid indifference. Sometimes he did not listen at all, sometimes he laughed a short, heavy laugh, sometimes he flung him off with a rough speech. But in spite of this, there were changes gradually made in the Works—trifling changes, of which Haworth was either not conscious, or which he disdained to notice. He lost something of his old masterful thoroughness, he was less regular in his business habits, he was prone to be tyrannical by fits and starts.

"Go to Ffrench," he said, roughly, to one of the "hands" on one occasion: and though before he had reached the door he was called back, the man did not easily forget the incident.

Miss Ffrench looked on at all of this with a great deal of interest.

"He does not care for the place as he did," she said to Murdoch. "He does not like to share his power with another man. It is a nightmare to him."

By this time she had seen Murdoch the oftener

of the two. Mr. Ffrench's fancy for him was more enthusiastic than his fancy for the young man from Manchester or the Cumberland mechanic. He also found him useful, and was not chary of utilizing him. In time, the servants of the house ceased to regard him as an outsider, and were surprised when he was absent for a few days.

"We have a fellow at our place whom you will hear of some of these days," Ffrench said to his friends. "He spends his evenings with me often."

"Ffrench has taken a great fancy to thee, lad," Haworth said, drily. "He says you're goin' to astonish us some of these days."

"Does he?" Murdoch answered.

"Ay. He's got a notion that you're holding on to summat on the quiet, and that it'll come out when we're not expecting it."

They were in the little work-room together, and Murdoch, leaning back in his chair with his hands clasped behind his head, looked before him without replying, except by a slight knitting of his brows.

Haworth laughed harshly.

"Confound him for a fool!" he said. "I'm sick of the chap, with his talk. He'll stir me up some o' these days." Then he looked up at his companion. "He has you up there every night or so," he said. "What does he want of you?"

"Never the same thing twice," said Murdoch.

"Do you—always see her?"

"Yes."

The man moved in his seat, a sullen red rising to his forehead.

"What—has she to say?" he asked.

Murdoch turned about to confront him. He spoke in a low voice, and slowly.

"Do you want to know," he said, "whether she treats me as she would treat another man? Is that it?"

"Ay," was the grim answer, "summat o' that sort, lad."

Murdoch left his chair. He uttered half a dozen words hoarsely.

"Come up to the house some night and judge for yourself," he said.

He went out of the room without looking

backward. It was Saturday noon, and he had the half-day of leisure before him, but he did not turn homeward. He made his way to the high road and struck out upon it. He had no definite end in view, at first, except the working off of his passionate excitement, but when, after twenty minutes' walk, he came within sight of Broxton Chapel and its graveyard his steps slackened, and when he reached the gate, he stopped a moment and pushed it open and turned in.

It was a quiet little place, with an almost rustic air, of which even the small, ugly chapel could not rob it. The grass grew long upon the mounds of earth and swayed softly in the warm wind. Only common folk lay there, and there were no monuments and even few slabs. Murdoch glanced across the sun-lit space to the grass-covered mound of which he had thought when he stopped at the gateway.

He had not thought of meeting any one, and at the first moment the sight of a figure standing at the grave-side in the sunshine was something of a shock to him. He went forward more slowly, even with some reluctance, though he

had recognised at once that the figure was that of Christian Murdoch.

She stood quite still, looking down, not hearing him until he was close upon her. She seemed startled when she saw him.

"Why did you come here?" she asked.

"I don't know," he answered. "I needed quiet, I suppose, and the place has a quiet look. Why did you come?"

"It is not the first time I have been," she said.

"I come here often."

"You!" he said. "Why?"

She pointed to the mound at her feet with a singular gesture.

"Because *he* is here," she said, "and I have learned to care for him."

She knelt down and laid her hand upon the grass, and he remembered again her emotion in the strange scene which had occurred before.

"I know him very well," she said. "I *know* him."

"You told me that I would not understand," he said. "It is true that I don't yet——"

Suddenly there were tears in her eyes and in her voice.

"He does not seem a dead man to me," she said. "He never will."

"I do not think," he answered, heavily, "that his life seems at an end to any of us."

"Not to me," she repeated. "I have thought of him until I have seemed to grow near to him, and to know what his burden was, and how patiently he bore it. I have never been patient. I have rebelled always, and so it has gone to my heart all the more."

Murdoch looked down upon the covering sod with a pang.

"He did bear it patiently," he said, "at the bitterest and worst."

"I know that," she replied. "I have been sure of it."

"I found some papers in my room when I first came," she went on. "Some of them were plans he had drawn thirty years ago. He had been very patient and constant with them. He had drawn the same thing again and again. Often he had written a few words upon them, and they



helped me to understand. After I had looked them over I could not forget. They haunted me and came back to me. I began to care for him and put things together until all was real."

Then she added, slowly, and in a lowered voice :

"I have even thought that if he had lived he would have been fond of me. I don't know why, but I have thought that perhaps he would."

For the first time in his knowledge of her, Murdoch saw in her the youth he had always missed. Her dark and bitter young face was softened ; for the moment she seemed almost a child,—even though a child whose life had been clouded by the shadow of sin and wrong.

"I think—he would," he said slowly.

"And I have got into the habit of coming here when I was lonely or—at my worst."

"You are lonely often, I dare say," he returned wearily. "I wish it could be helped."

"It is nothing new," she replied, with something of her old manner, "and there is no help for it."

But her touch upon the grass was a caress.

She smoothed it softly, and moved with singular gentleness a few dead leaves which had dropped upon it.

“When I come here I am—better,” she said, “and—less hard. Things do not seem to matter so much—or to look so shameful.”

A pause followed, which she herself broke in upon.

“I have thought a great deal of—what he left unfinished,” she said. “I have wished that I might see it. It would be almost as if I had seen himself.”

“I can show it to you,” Murdoch answered. “It is a little thing to have caused so great pain.”

They said but little else until they rose to go. As he sat watching the long grass wave under the warm wind, Murdoch felt that his excitement had calmed down. He was in a cooler mood when they got up at last. But before they turned away the girl lingered for a moment, as if she wished to speak.

“Sometimes,” she faltered, — “sometimes I have thought you had half forgotten.”

"Nay," he answered, "never that, God knows."

"I could not bear to believe it," she said, passionately. "It would make me hate you!"

When they reached home he took her up-stairs to his room. He had locked the door when he left it in the morning. He unlocked it, and they went in.

A cloth covered something standing upon the table. He drew it aside with an unsteady hand.

"Look at it," he said. "It has been there since last night. You see it haunts me too."

"What!" she said, "you brought it out yourself—again!"

"Yes," he answered, "again."

She drew nearer, and sat down in the chair before the table.

"He used to sit here?" she said.

"Yes."

"If it had been finished," she said, almost as if speaking to herself, "death would have seemed a little thing to him. Even if it should be finished now, I think he would forget the rest."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## "TEN SHILLINGS' WORTH."

THE same evening Mr. Briarley, having partaken of an early tea and some vigorous advice from his wife, had suddenly, during a lull in the storm, vanished from the domestic circle, possibly called therefrom by the recollection of a previous engagement. Mrs. Briarley had gone out to do her "Sunday shoppin'," the younger children had been put to bed, the older ones were disporting themselves in the streets and byways, and consequently Janey was left alone, uncheered, save by the presence of Granny Dixon, who had fallen asleep in her chair, with her cap unbecomingly disarranged.

Janey sat down upon her stool at a discreet distance from the hearth. She had taken down from its place her last book of "memoirs,"—a volume of a more than usually orthodox and

peppery flavour. She held it within range of the light of the fire, and began to read in a subdued tone with much unction.

But she had only mastered the interesting circumstance that "James Joseph William was born November 8th," when her attention was called to the fact that wheels had stopped before the gate, and she paused to listen.

"Bless us!" she said. "Some un's comin' in."

The person in question was Haworth, who so far dispensed with ceremony as to walk up to the firelight without even knocking at the door which stood open.

"Where's your father?" he demanded.

"He's takken hissen off to th' beer-house," said Janey, "as he allus does o' Saturday ncet,—an' ivvery other neet too, as he gets th' chance."

A chair stood near, and Haworth took it.

"I'll sit down and wait for him," he replied.

"Tha'lt ha' to wait a good bit then," said Miss Briarley. "He'll noan be whoam till midneet."

She stood in no awe of her visitor. She had heard him discussed too freely and too often.

Of late years she had not unfrequently assisted in discussions herself. She was familiar with his sins and shortcomings, and regarded him with due severity.

“He’ll noan be whoam till midneet,” she repeated as she seated herself on her stool.

But Haworth did not move. He was in a mysterious humour it was plain. In a minute more his young companion began to stare at him with open eyes. She saw something in his face which bewildered her.

“He’s gotten more than’s good fur him,” she was about to decide shrewdly, when he leaned forward and touched her with the handle of the whip he held.

“You’re a sharp little lass, I warrant,” he said.

Janey regarded him with some impatience. He was flushed and somewhat dishevelled, and spoke awkwardly.

“You’re a sharp little lass, I’ll warrant,” he said again.

“I ha’ to be,” she responded tartly. “Tha’d be sharp thyssen if tha had as mich to look after as I ha’.”

“I dare say,” he answered. “I dare say.” Then added, even more awkwardly still, “I’ve heard Murdoch say you were—Murdoch.”

The disfavour with which she had examined him began to be mingled with distrust. She hitched her stool a few inches backward.

“Mester Murdoch!” she echoed. “Ay, I know him well enow.”

“He comes here every day or so?”

“Ay, him an’ me’s good friends.”

“He’s got a good many friends,” he said.

“Ay,” she answered. “He’s a noice chap. Most o’ folk tak’ to him. Theer’s Mr. Ffrench now and *her*.”

“He goes there pretty often?”

“Ay, oftener than he goes anywheer else. They mak’ as mich o’ him as if he wur a gentleman.”

“Did *he* tell you that?”

“Nay,” she answered. “He does na talk mich about it. I’ve fun it out fro’ them as knows.”

Then a new idea presented itself to her.

“What does tha want to know fur?” she demanded with unceremonious candour.

He did not tell her why. He gave no notice to her question save by turning away from the fire suddenly, and asking her another.

"What does he say about *her*?" he asked.

He spoke in such a manner that she pushed her stool farther back still, and sat staring at him blankly, and with some indignation.

"He does na say *nowt* about her," she exclaimed. "What's up wi' thee?"

The next moment she uttered an ejaculation, and the book of memoirs fell upon the floor. A flame shot up from the fire and showed her his face. He drew forth his purse, and opening it took out a coin. The light fell upon that too, and showed her what it was.

"Do you see that?" he asked.

"Ay," she answered, "it's a half-sov'rin."

"I'll give it to you," he said, "if you'll tell me what he says and what he does. You're sharp enow to have seen summat, I'll swear, and I'll give it you if you'll tell me."

He did not care what impression he made on her, or how he entangled himself. He only thought of one thing.



"Tell me what he says and what he does," he repeated, "and I'll give it to you."

Janey rose from her stool in such a hurry that it lost its balance and fell over.

"I—I dunnot want it!" she cried. "I dunnot want it. I can na mak' thee out!"

"You're not as sharp as I took you for, if you don't want it," he answered. "You'll not earn another as easy, my lass."

Only stern common sense rescued her from the weakness of backing out of the room into the next apartment.

"I dunnot know what tha'rt drivin' at," she said. "I tell thee—I dunnot know nowt."

"Does he never say," he put it to her, "that he's been there—and that he's seen her—and that she's sat and talked—and that he's looked at her—and listened—and thought over it afterward?"

'This was the last straw. Bewilderment turned to contempt.

"*That* would na be worth ten shillin'," she said. "Tha knows he's been theer, an' tha knows he's seen her, an' tha knows he could na

see her wi’out lookin’ at her. I dunnot see as theer’s owt i’ lookin’ at her, or i’ listenin’ neyther. Wheer’s th’ use o’ givin’ ten shillin’ to hear summat yo know yo’rsen? Theer’s nowt i’ that!”

“Has he ever said it?” he persisted.

“No,” she answered, “he has na. He nivver wur much give to talk, an’ he says less than ivver i’ these days.”

“Has he never said that she treated him well, and—was easier to please than he’d thought; has he never said nowt like that?”

“Nay, that he has na!” with vigour. “Nowt o’ t’ soart.”

He got up as unceremoniously and abruptly as he had sat down.

“I was an accursed fool for coming,” she heard him mutter.

He threw the half-sovereign toward her, and it fell on the floor.

“Art tha goin’ to gi’ it me?” she asked.

“Yes,” he answered, and he strode through the doorway into the darkness, leaving her staring at it.

She went to the fire and bending down examined it closely and rubbed it with a corner of her apron. Then she tried its ring upon the flagged floor.

"Ay," she said, "it's a good un, sure enow! It's a good un!"

She had quite lost her breath. She sat down upon her stool again, forgetting the memoirs altogether.

"I nivver heard so mich doment made over nowt i' aw my days," she said. "I conna see now what he wur up to, axin' questions as if he wur i' drink. He mun ha' been i' drink or he'd nivver ha' gi'en it to me."

And on the mother's return she explained the affair to her upon this sound and common-sense basis.

"Mester Haworth's been here," she said, "an' he wur i' drink an' give me ten shillin'. I could na mak' out what he wur drivin' at. He wur askin' questions as put me out o' patience. Eh! what foo's men is when they've gotten too much."

When he left the house, Haworth sprang into

his gig with an oath. Since the morning he had had time to think over things slowly. He had worked himself up into a desperate, head-long mood. His blood burned in his veins, his pulses throbbed. He went home to his dinner, but ate nothing. He drank heavily, and sat at the table wearing such a look that his mother was stricken with wonder.

"I'm out o' humour, old lady," he said to her. "Stick to your dinner, and don't mind me. A chap with a place like mine on his mind can't always be up to the mark."

"If you ain't ill, Jem," she said, "it don't matter your not talkin'. You mustn't think o' me, my dear! I'm used to havin' lived alone so long."

After dinner he went out again, but before he left the room he went to her and kissed her.

"There's nowt wrong wi' me," he said. "You've no need to trouble yourself about that. I'm right enow, never fear."

"There's nothin' else could trouble me," she said, "nothin', so long as you're well an' happy."

"There's nowt to go agen me bein' happy," he said, a little grimly. "Not yet, as I know on. I don't let things go agen me easy."

About half an hour later, he stood in the road before his partner's house. The night was warm, and the windows of the drawing-room were thrown open. He stood and looked up at them for a minute, and then spoke aloud.

"Aye," he said, "he's there, by George!"

He could see inside plainly, but the things he saw best were—Rachel Ffrench and Murdoch. Ffrench himself sat in a large chair, reading. Miss Ffrench stood upon the hearth. She rested an arm upon the low mantel, and talked to Murdoch, who stood opposite to her. The man who watched uttered an oath at the sight of her.

"Him!" he said. "Him—damn him!" and grew hot and cold by turns.

He kept his stand for full ten minutes, and then crossed the road.

The servant who answered his summons at the door regarded him with amazement.

"I know they're in," he said, making his way past him. "I saw 'em through the window."

Those in the drawing-room heard his heavy feet as he mounted the staircase. It is possible that each recognised the sound. Ffrench rose hurriedly, and, it must be owned, with some slight trepidation. Rachel merely turned her face toward the door. She did not change her position otherwise at all. Murdoch did not move.

“My dear fellow,” said Ffrench, with misplaced enthusiasm. “I am glad to see you.”

But Haworth passed him over with a nod. His eyes were fixed on Murdoch. He gave him a nod also and spoke to him.

“What, you’re here, are you?” he said. “That’s a good thing.”

“We think so,” said Mr. Ffrench, with fresh fervour. “My dear fellow, sit down.”

He took the chair offered him, but still looked at Murdoch and spoke to him.

“I’ve been to Briarley’s,” he said. “I’ve had a talk with that little lass of his. She gave me the notion you’d be here. She’s a sharp little un, by George!”

“They’re all sharp,” said Mr. Ffrench. “The

precocity one finds in these manufacturing towns is something astonishing—astonishing.”

He launched at once into a dissertation upon the causes of precocity in a manufacturing town, and became so absorbed in his theme that it mattered very little that Haworth paid no attention to him. He was leaning back in his chair with his hands in his pockets, not moving his eyes from Murdoch.

Mr. Ffrench was in the middle of his dissertation when, half an hour afterward, Haworth got up without ceremony. Murdoch was going.

“I’ll go with you,” he said to him.

They went out of the room and down the staircase together without speaking. They did not even look at each other, in fact.

When they were fairly out of the room Mr. Ffrench glanced somewhat uneasily at his daughter.

“Really,” he said, “he is not always a pleasant fellow to deal with. One is never sure of reaching him.” And then, as he received no answer, he returned in some embarrassment to his book.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## AT AN END.

WHEN they stood in the road, Haworth laid his hand upon his companion's shoulder heavily.

"Come up to the Works, lad," he said, "and let's have a bit of a talk."

His voice and his touch had something in common. Murdoch understood them both. There was no need for clearer speech.

"Why there?" he asked.

"It's quiet there. I've a fancy for it."

"I have no fancy against it. As well there as anywhere else."

"Aye," said Haworth. "Not only as well, but better."

He led the way into his own room and struck a light. He flung his keys upon the table; they struck it with a heavy clang. Then he



spoke his first words since they had turned from the gateway.

"Aye," he said, "not only as well, but better. I'm at home here, if I'm out everywhere else. The place knows me and I know it. I'm best man here, by God! if I'm out everywhere else."

He sat down at the table and rested his chin upon his hand. His hand shook, and his forehead was clammy.

Murdoch threw himself into the chair opposite to him.

"Go on," he said. "Say what you have to say."

Haworth bent forward a little.

"You've got on better than I'd have thought, lad," he said; "better than I'd have thought."

"What!" hoarsely. "Does she treat me as she treats other men?"

"Nay," said Haworth, "not as she treats me—by the Lord, Harry!"

The deadly bitterness which possessed him was terrible. He was livid with it.

"I've thought of a good many," he said. "I've looked on at 'em as they stood round

her—chaps of her own sort, with money and the rest of it; but I never thought of you—not once.”

“No,” answered Murdoch, “I dare say not.”

“No—not once,” the man repeated. “Get up, and let’s take a look at you,” he said. “Happen I’ve not had the right notion on you.”

“Don’t say anything you’ll repent,” said Murdoch. “It’s bad enough as it is.”

But his words were like chaff before the wind.

“You!” cried the man. “You were the chap that knew nought of women’s ways. You’d scarce look one on ’em in the face. *You’re* not the build I thought they took to.”

“You told me that once before,” said Murdoch, with a bitter laugh. “I’ve not forgotten it.”

Haworth’s clenched fist fell upon the table with a force which made the keys ring.

“Blast you!” he said. “You’re nigher to her now than me—*now*!”

“Then,” he was answered, “you may give up.”

“Give up!” breathlessly. “Nay, not that, my lad. I’ve not come to that yet.”

Then his rage broke forth again.

"*You* to be going there on the quiet!" he cried. "*You* to be making way with her, and finding her easy to please, and priding yourself on it!"

"*I* please her!" said Murdoch. "*I* pride myself!"

He got up and began to pace the floor.

"You're mad!" he said. "Mad!"

Haworth checked himself to stare at him.

"What did you go for," he asked, "if it wasn't for that?"

Murdoch stopped in his walk. He turned himself about.

"I don't know," he said; "I don't know. Do you think," he said, in a hushed voice, after the pause which followed,—"*do you think I expect anything? Do you think I look forward or backward? Can you understand that it is enough as it stands—enough?*"

Haworth still stared at him dully.

"Nay," he returned, "that I cannot."

"*I* to stand before her as a man with a best side which might win her favour! What is there in *me*, that she should give me a thought when I

am not near her? What have I done? What has my life been worth? It may be nothing in the end! Good God! nothing!"

He said it almost as if stunned. For the moment he was overwhelmed, and had forgotten.

"You're nigher to her than I am," said Haworth. "You think because you're one o' the gentleman sort——"

"Gentleman!" speculatively. "I a gentleman?"

"Aye, damn you," bitterly, "and you know it."

The very words seemed to rouse him. He shook his clenched hand.

"That's it!" he cried. "There's where it is. You've got it in you, and you know it—and she knows it too!"

"I have never asked myself whether I was or not," said Murdoch. "I have not cared. What did it matter? What you said just now was true, after all. I know nothing of women. I know little enough of men. I have been a dull fellow, I think, and slow to learn. I can only take what comes."

He came back to the table and threw himself into his chair.

"Do either of us know what we came here for?" he asked.

"We came to talk it over," was Haworth's answer, "and we've done it."

"Then, if we have done it, let us go our ways."

"Nay, not yet. I've summat more to say."

"Say it," Murdoch replied, "and let us have it over."

"It's this," he returned. "You're a different chap from what I took you for—a different chap. I never thought of you—not once."

"You've said that before."

"Aye," grimly, "I've said it before. Like enough I shall say it again. It sticks to me. We've been good friends, after a manner, and that makes it stick to me. I don't say you're to blame. I haven't quite made the thing out yet. We're of a different build, and there's been times before when I haven't quite been up to you. But we've been friends, after a manner, and now th' time's come when we're done with that."

“Done with it!” repeated Murdoch, mechanically.

“Aye,” meeting his glance fully, “done with it! We’ll begin fair and square, lad. It’s done with. Do you think,” with deadly coolness, “I’d stop at aught if the time come?”

He rose a little from his seat, bending forward.

“Nought’s never come in my way yet that’s stopped me,” he said. “Things has gone agen me, and I’ve got th’ best on ’em in one way or another. I’ve not minded how. I’ve gone on till I’ve reached this. Nought’s stopped me—nought never shall!”

He fell back in his chair and wiped the cold sweat from his forehead with his handkerchief.

“I wish,” he said, “it had been another chap. I never thought of you—not once.”

## CHAPTER XXV.

## "I SHALL NOT TURN BACK."

MURDOCH went out into the night alone. When he found himself outside the iron gate he stood still for a moment.

"I will not go home yet," he said; "not yet."

He knew this time where he was going when he turned his steps upon the road again. He had only left the place a few hours before.

The moonlight gave it almost a desolate look, he thought, as he passed through the entrance. The wind still swayed the grass upon the mounds fitfully, and the head-stones cast darker shadows upon them. There was no shadow upon the one under which Stephen Murdoch rested. It lay in the broad moonlight. Murdoch noticed this as he stopped beside it. He sat down upon the grass, just as he had done in the afternoon.

"Better not go home just yet," he said again.  
"There is time enough."

Suddenly an almost unnatural calmness had fallen upon him. His passions and uncertainties of the past few months seemed small things. He had reached a climax, and for a moment there seemed time enough. He thought of the past almost coldly—going over the ground mentally, step by step. It was as if he thought of the doings of another man—one who was younger and simpler and whose life was now over.

"There are a good many things that are done with," he said mechanically, recalling Haworth's words.

He thought of the model standing in its old place in the empty room. It was a living thing awaiting his coming. The end might be anything—calamity, failure, death!—but to-night he had taken his first step toward that end.

"To-night I shall begin as he began," he thought; "to-night."

He threw himself full length upon the grass, clasping his hands beneath his head, his face



turned upward to the vast clearness and depth above him. He had known it would come some day, but he never thought of its coming in this way. The man who slept under the earth at his side had begun with hope; he began as one who neither hoped nor feared, yielding only to a force stronger than himself.

He lay in this manner looking up for nearly an hour. Then he arose and stood with bared head in the white light and stillness.

"I shall not turn back," he said aloud at last, as if to some presence near him. "I shall not turn back at least. Do not fear it."

And he turned away.

It was his mother who opened the door for him when he reached home.

"Come in," he said to her, with a gesture toward the inner room. "I have something to say to you."

She followed him in silence. Her expression was cold and fixed. It struck him that she, too, had lived past hope and dread.

She did not sit down when she had closed the door, but stood upright, facing him.

He spoke hoarsely.

"I am going upstairs," he said. "I told you once that some day you would see the light again in spite of us both. You can guess what work I shall do to-night."

"Yes," she answered, "I can guess. I gave up long ago."

She looked at him steadily ; her eyes dilated a little as if with slow-growing fear of him.

"I knew it would end so," she went on. "I fought against my belief that it would, but it grew stronger every day—every hour. There was no other way."

"No," he replied, "there was no other way."

"I have seen it in your face," she said. "I have heard it in your voice. It has never been absent from your thoughts a moment—nor mine."

He did not speak.

"At first, when he died——"

Her voice faltered and broke, and then rose in a cry almost shrill—

"He did not die!" she cried. "He is not

dead. He lives now—*here!* There is no death for him—not even death, until it is done.”

She panted for breath ; her thin chest rose and fell—and yet suddenly she had checked herself again, and stood before him with her first strained calm.

“Go,” she said. “I cannot hold you. If there is an end to be reached, reach it, for God’s sake, and let him rest.”

“Wish me God-speed,” he said, “I—have more to bear than you think of.”

For answer she repeated steadily words which she had uttered before :

“I do not believe in it ; I have never believed for one hour.”

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## “ A REVOLUTION.”

IN a month's time the Broxton Bank was an established fact. It had sprung into existence in a manner which astonished even its originator. Haworth had come to him in cool blood and talked the matter over. He had listened to the expounding of his views, and without being apparently much moved by his eloquence, had still shown a disposition to weigh the plan, and having given a few days to deliberation, he had returned a favourable decision.

“The thing sounds well,” he said, “and it may be a sharp stroke that way. When the rest on 'em hear on it, it'll set 'em thinkin'. Blast 'em ! I like to astonish 'em, an' give 'em summat to chew.”

Mr. Ffrench could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses. He had been secretly conscious of

playing a minor part in all business transactions. His pet theories had been thrust aside as worthy of small notice. His Continental experience had been openly set at naught. When he had gone to the trouble of explaining his ideas to the heads of the various departments, he had been conscious of illuminating smiles on the grimy countenances around him. His rather frail physique, his good breeding, his well-modulated voice, had each been the subject of derisive comment.

“Gi’ him a puddlin’-rake an’ let him puddle a bit,” he had heard a brawny fellow say, after one of the most practical dissertations.

After his final interview with Haworth, he went home jubilant. At dinner he could speak of nothing else. Miss Ffrench heard the details from beginning to end, and enjoyed them in a manner peculiarly her own.

At the “Who’d ha’ thowt it?” no little excitement prevailed when the movement was discussed.

“A bank!” said Foxy Gibbs. “An’ wheer did he get th’ money to set up a bank wi’? Why, he gotten it out o’ th’ workin’ mon, an’ the sweat o’ th’ workin’ mon’s brow. If theer wur na no

banks, theer'd be more money to put in 'em. I dunnot believe i' banks mysen. Let the brass cerkylate—let it cerkylate.”

“Ay,” said Mr. Briarley, who had reached his second quart, “let it cerkylate, an' he'll ha' more comfort, will th' workin' mon. Theer's too many on 'em,” with natural emotion. “They're th' ruin o' th' country. Theer's summat wrong wi' 'em. If they'd gi' a chap summat to put i' 'em there'd be some chance for him ; but that's allus th' way. He has na no chance, hasn't th' workin' mon—he has na no——”

“Shut up !” said Foxy Gibbs.

“Eh ?” inquired the orator, weakly and uncertainly.

“Shut up, till tha's gotten less beer i' thee !”

“Shut——” repeated Mr. Briarley, winking his eyes slowly, “—up ?”

He seized his beer mug and gazed into its depths in some confusion. A deep sigh escaped him.

“That's allus th' road,” he faltered. “It's th' road wi' Sararann, an' it's th' road wi' aw on 'em. He has no chance, has na a mon as is misforchnit.”

And he happily disposed of the beer before Janey opened the door and appeared to marshal him homeward.

But the Broxton Bank was an established fact, and created no small sensation.

“He is a bold fellow, this Haworth,” it was said among his rivals; “but he will overstep himself one of these days.”

“He’s set up a bank, has he?” shouted Granny Dixon, on Murdoch’s first visit after she had heard the story.

“Yes,” Murdoch answered.

She sat glowering at the fire a few moments almost bent double, and then, having deluded her audience into believing she had subsided, suddenly started and came to life again with increased vigour.

“I’ve gotten my brass i’ th’ Manchester Savin’s,” she cried, “an’ I’ll keep it theer.”

It seemed unnecessary to reply, and nobody made any remark upon this statement of facts. But the venerable matron had not concluded.

“I’ll keep it theer!” she repeated—“keep it theer! I conna bide him, no more than I can

bide her.” And then she returned to her fire, fixing her great eyes upon it and mumbling with no small elation.

“Th’ thing ’ll break now, for sure,” commented her much-tried hostess, sardonically. “It conna stand up agen that, i’ reason. Haworth ud better sell the Works at th’ start afore it’s too late.”

There had been some vague wonder in Murdoch’s mind as to what the result of Haworth’s outburst against himself would be.

The first time he found himself confronting him as he went to his work-room he spoke to him—

“You said once,” he remarked, “that you had kept this room empty because you did not care to be at close quarters with every man. Now——”

“Get thee in, my lad,” he interrupted, drily. “It suits me well enow to ha’ you nigh me. Never fear that.”

The only outward change made was in his manner. He went about his labour with a deadly persistence. He came early and went home late. The simplest “hand” saw that some powerful force was at work. He was silent, and harder in



his rule of those under him. He made closer bargains and more daring plans. Men who had been his rivals began to have a kind of fear of him. All he took in hand throve.

"He is a wonderful fellow," said Ffrench to his friends. "Wonderful—wonderful!"

Even the friends in question, who were, some of them, country magnates of great dignity, began to find their opinion of the man shaken. In these days there was actually nothing to complain of. The simple little country woman reigned in his household. She attended the Broxton chapel and dispensed her innocent charities on all sides. Finally, a dowager of high degree (the patroness of a charitable society) made the bold move of calling upon her for a subscription.

"It weren't as hard to talk to her, Jem, as I'd have thought," said Mrs. Haworth afterward. "She began to tell me about the poor women as suffers so, an' somehow I forgot about her bein' so grand. I couldn't think of nothin' but the poor creturs an' their pain, an' when I come to sign my name my 'and trembled so an' my eyes was that full I couldn't hardly tell

what I'd put down. To think of them poor things——"

"How much did you give her?" asked Haworth.

"I give her ten pound, my dear, an'——"

He wrote out a cheque and handed it to her.

"Go to her to-morrow and give her that," he said. "Happen it 'll be summat new for her to get fifty at a stroke."

So it began to be understood that the master of "Haworth's" was a bugbear with redeeming points, after all. The Broxton Bank had its weight too, and the new cottages which it was necessary to build.

"It is to Haworth after all that you owe the fact that the place is growing," said Ffrench.

There came an evening when, on entering the drawing-room of a county potentate with whom she and her father were to dine, Rachel Ffrench found herself looking directly at Haworth, who stood in the centre of a group of guests. They were talking to him with an air of great interest, and listening to his offhand replies with actual respect. Suddenly the tide had turned. Before

the evening had passed the man was a lion, and all the more a lion because he had been so long tabooed. He went in to dinner with the lady-patroness, and she afterward announced her intention of calling upon his mother in state.

"There is a rough candour about the man, my dear," she said, "which one must respect, and it appears that he has really reformed."

There was no difficulty after this. Mrs. Haworth had visitors every day, who came and examined her and wondered, and, somehow, were never displeased by her tender credulity. She admired them all and believed in them, and was always ready with tears and relief for their pensioners and charities.

"Don't thank me, ma'am," she would say. "Don't never thank me, for it's not me that deserves it, but him that's so ready and generous to every one that suffers. There never was such a kind heart before, it seems to me, ma'am, nor such a lovin' one."

Haworth's wealth, his success, his open-handedness, his past sins, were the chief topics of conversation. To speak of Broxton was to speak of

the man who had made it what it was by his daring and his power, and who was an absolute ruler over it and its inhabitants.

Ffrench was a triumphant man. He was a potentate also ; he could ride his hobby to the sound of applause. When he expatiated upon “processes” he could gain an audience which was attentive and appreciative. He had not failed this time, at least, and was put down as a shrewd fellow after all.

In the festivities which seemed, somehow, the result of this sudden revulsion of feeling, Rachel Ffrench was naturally a marked figure. Among the women, with whom she was not exactly a favourite, it was still conceded that she was not a young woman whom it was easy to ignore. Her beauty—of which it was impossible to say that she was conscious—was of a type not to be rivalled. When she entered a room, glancing neither right nor left, those who had seen her before unavoidably looked again, and those who had not were silent as she passed. There was a delicate suggestion of indifference in her manner, which might be real or it might not. Her

demeanour toward Haworth never altered, even to the extent of the finest shadow of change.

When they were in a room together his eye followed her with stealthy vigilance, and her knowledge of the fact was not a disturbing one. The intensity of her consciousness was her great strength. She was never unprepared. When he approached her, she met him with her little untranslatable smile. He might be bold, or awkward, or desperate, but he never found her outwardly conscious or disturbed, or a shade colder or warmer.

It was only natural that it should not be long before others saw what she, seeing, showed no knowledge of. It was easily seen that he made no effort at concealment. His passion revealed itself in every look and gesture. He could not have controlled it if he would, and would not if he could.

“ Let ’em see,” he said to himself. “ It’s naught to them. It’s betwixt her and me.” He even bore himself with a sullen air of defiance at times, knowing that he had gained one thing at least. He was nearer to her in one way than any other

man ; he might come and go as he chose, he saw her day after day, he knew her in-goings and out-comings. The success which had restored her father's fortunes was his success.

"I can make her like a queen among 'em," he said,—*"like a queen, by George,—and I'll do it."*

Every triumph which fell to him he regarded only as it would have weight in her eyes. When society opened its doors to him, he said to himself, "Now she'll see that I can stand up with the best of 'em, gentleman or no gentleman !"

When he suddenly found himself a prominent figure—a man deferred to and talked of, he waited with secret feverishness to see what the effect upon her would be.

"It's what women like," he said. "It's what *she* likes more than most on 'em. It'll be bound to tell in the end."

He laboured as he had never laboured before ; his ambitions were boundless ; he strove and planned and ventured, lying awake through long hours of the night pondering and building, his daring growing with his success.

There occurred one thing, however, which he

had not bargained for. In his laudable enthusiasm Mr. Ffrench could not resist the temptation to sound the praises of his *protégé*. His belief in him had increased instead of diminished with time, as he had been forced regretfully to acknowledge had been the case during the eras of the young man from Manchester and his fellows. He had reason to suspect that a climax had been reached and that his hopes might be realised. It is not every man who keeps on hand a genius. Naturally his friends heard of Murdoch often. Those who came to the Works were taken to his work-room as to a point of interest. He became in time a feature, and was spoken of with a mixture of curiosity and bewilderment. To each visitor Ffrench told in strict confidence the story of his father with due effect.

"And it's my impression," he always added, "that we shall hear more of this invention one of these days. He is a singular fellow—reserved and not easy to read—just the man to carry a purpose in his mind and say nothing of it, and in the end startle society by accomplishing what he has held in view."

Finally, upon one occasion, when his daughter was making her list of invitations for a dinner-party they were to give, he turned to her suddenly, with some hesitation in his manner.

“ Oh—by the way,” he said, there’s “ Murdoch, we’ve never had Murdoch.”

She wrote the name without comment.

“ Who next ? ” she asked, after having done it.

“ You see,” he went on, waveringly, “ there is really nothing which could be an obstacle in the way of our inviting him—really nothing. He is—he is all that we could wish.”

The reply he received staggered him.

“ It is nonsense,” she said, looking up calmly, “ to talk of obstacles. I should have invited him long ago.”

“ You ! ” he exclaimed. “ Would you — really ? ”

“ Yes,” she answered. “ Why not ? ”

“ Why—not ? ” he repeated, feebly. “ I don’t know why not. I thought that perhaps——” and then he broke off. “ I wish I had known as much before,” he added.



When he received the invitation, Murdoch declined it.

"I should only be out of place," he said candidly to Miss Ffrench. "I should know nobody and nobody would know me. Why should I come?"

"There is a very good reason why you should come," answered the young woman with perfect composure. "*I am the reason.*"

There was no further discussion of the point. He was present, and Haworth sat opposite to him at the table.

"It's the first time for *him*?" said Haworth to Miss Ffrench afterward.

"It is the first time he has dined here with other people," she answered. "Have you a reason for asking?"

He held his coffee-cup in his hand and glanced over it across the room.

"He is not like the rest on 'em," he said, "but he stands it pretty well, by George!"

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## "THE BEGINNING."

FOR some time there had hung over the conduct of Mr. Briarley an air of deep mystery. The boon of his society had been granted to his family even less frequently than ever. His habit of sudden and apparently unaccountable disappearance from the home circle after, or even in the midst of, an argument had become more than usually pronounced. He went out every night and invariably returned under the influence of malt liquor.

"Wheer he gets th' brass bangs me," said Mrs. Briarley. "He does na tak' it out o' his wage, that's certain, fur he has na been a ha'penny short fur three week, an' he does na get it o' tick, *that* I know. Bannett at th' 'Public' is na a foo'. Wheer does he get th' brass fro'?"

But this was not easily explained. On being

catechised, Mr. Briarley either shed tears of penitence or shook his head with deep solemnity of meaning. At times when he began to shake it—if the hour was late and his condition specially foggy—he was with difficulty induced to stop shaking it, but frequently continued to do so with protracted fervour and significance, gradually decreasing until he fell asleep. When he was sober he was timorous and abstracted. He started at the sound of the opening door, and apparently existed in a state of secret expectation and alarm.

"I conna tell thee, Sararann," he would say. "At least," with some tremor, "that I wunnot tell thee just yet. Thou'lt know i' toime."

He did not patronise the "Who'd ha' Thowt it?" as much as formerly, in these days, Janey discovered. He evidently got the beer elsewhere, and at somebody's expense. His explanation of this was a brilliant and happy one, but it was only offered once, in consequence of the mode of its reception by his hearers. He presented it suddenly one night after some moments of silence and mental research.

"Theer's a gentlemon as is a friend o' moine,"

he said, "as has had uncommon luck. His heirs has deed an' left him a forchin, an' he's come into it, an' he's very mich tuk wi' me. I dunnot know as I ivver seed ony one as mich tuk wi' me, Sararann—an' his heirs deein' an' leavin' him a forchin—that theer's how it is, Sararann,—that theer's how it is."

"Tha brazant leer!" cried Mrs. Briarley, aghast. "Tha brazant leer! Get out wi' thee!" in an outburst of indignation. "Thee an' thy forchins an' heirs deein'—as if it wur na bad enow at th' start. A noice chap tha art to set thysen up to know gentlefolks wi' heirs to dee an' leave 'em brass. Eh! Bless us! what art tha comin' too?"

The result was not satisfactory, as Mr. Briarley felt keenly.

"Tha hast gotten no confydence i' me, Sararann," he said, in weak protest. "Tha has na no faith—nor yet," following the train of thought with manifest uncertainty,—“nor yet no works.”

The situation was so painful, however, that he made no further efforts of the imagination to

elucidate the matter, and it remained temporarily obscured in mystery.

Only temporarily, however. A few weeks afterward Ffrench came down to the Works in great excitement. He went to Haworth's room, and finding him there, shut the door and almost dropped into a chair.

"What's up?" demanded Haworth, with some impatience. "What's up, man?"

"You haven't heard the report?" Ffrench answered, tremulously. "It hasn't reached you yet?"

"I've heard nowt to upset me. Out with it! What's up?"

He was plainly startled, and lost a shade of colour, but he held himself boldly. Ffrench explained himself with trepidation.

"The hands in Marfort and Molton and Howton are on the strike, and those in Dillup and Burton are plainly about to follow suit. I've just got a Manchester paper, which says the look-out is bad all over the country. Meetings have been going on in secret for some time."

He stopped and sat staring at his partner.

Haworth was deathly pale. He seemed for a moment to lack breath, and then suddenly the dark colour rushed to his face again.

"By ——" he began, and stopped with the oath upon his lips.

"Don't swear, for pity's sake," broke forth Ffrench, finding courage for protest in his very desperation. "It's not the time for it. Let's look the thing in the face."

"Look it in the face," Haworth repeated. "Ay, let's."

He said the words with a fierce sneer.

"Ay, look it in the face, man," he said again. "That's th' thing to do."

He bent forward, extending his hand across the table.

"Let's see th' paper," he demanded.

Ffrench gave it to him, and he read the paragraphs referred to in silence. When he had finished them, he folded the paper again mechanically.

"They might have done it last year and welcome, blast 'em!" he said. "They might have done it and welcome!"

Ffrench began to tremble.

"You've ventured a good deal of late, Haworth," he said, weakly. "You've done some pretty daring things, you know—and——"

Haworth turned on him.

"If I lose 'all I've made," he said, hoarsely, "shall I lose aught of yours, lad?"

Ffrench did not reply. He sat playing with his watch-chain nervously. He had cause for anxiousness on his own score, and his soul quaked within him.

"What is to be done?" he ventured at last.

"There's only one thing to be done," Haworth answered, pushing his chair back. "Stop it here—at th' start."

"Stop it?" Ffrench echoed, in amazement.

"Ay, stop it."

He got up and took his hat down and put it on.

"I'm goin' round the place and about th' yards and into th' town," he said. "There's naught for you to do but keep quiet. Th' quieter you keep the better for us. Go on as if you'd heard naught."

Stay here a bit, and then walk over to th' bank. Look alive, man !"

He went out and left Ffrench alone. In the passage he came upon a couple of men who were talking together in low voices. They started at sight of him, and walked away slowly.

He went first to the engine-room. There he found Floxham and Murdoch talking also. The old engineer wore an irritable air, and was plainly in a testy mood. Murdoch looked fagged and pale. Of late he was often so. As Haworth entered he turned toward him, uttering an exclamation.

"He is here now," he said. "That is well enough."

Floxham gave him a glance from under his bent, bushy brows.

"Ay," he answered. "We may as well out wi' it."

He touched his cap clumsily.

"Tell him," he said to Murdoch, "an' ha' it over."

Murdoch spoke in a cool, low voice.

"I have found out," he said, "that there is



trouble on foot. I began to suspect it a week ago. Some rough fellows from Manchester and Molton have been holding secret meetings at a low place here. Some of the hands have been attending them. Last night a worse and larger gang came and remained in the town. They are here now. They mean mischief, at least, and there are reports afloat that strikes are breaking out on all sides."

Haworth turned abruptly to Floxham.

"Where do you stand?" he asked roughly.

The old fellow laid his grimy hand upon his engine.

"I stand here, my lad," he answered. "That's wheer — an' I'll stick to it, unions or no unions."

"That's the worst side of the trouble," said Murdoch. "Those who would hold themselves aloof from the rest will be afraid of the 'trades unions.' If the worst comes to the worst their very lives will be in danger. They know that, and so do we."

"Ay, lad," said Floxham, "an' tha'rt reet theer."

Haworth ground his teeth and swore under his breath. Then he spoke to Murdoch.

"How is it going on here?" he asked.

"Badly enough, in a quiet way. You had better go and see for yourself."

He went out, walking from room to room, through the yards and wherever men were at work. Here and there a place was vacant. Where the work went on, it went on dully; he saw dogged faces and subdued ones; those who looked up as he passed wore an almost deprecatory air; those who did not look up at all, bent over their tasks with an expression which was at least negatively defiant. His keen eye discovered favourable symptoms, however; those who were in evil mood were his worst workmen—men who had their off days of drunken stupor and idleness, and the heads of departments were plainly making an effort to stir briskly and ignore the presence of any cloud upon their labour.

By the time he had made the rounds he had grasped the situation fully. The strait was desperate, but not as bad as it might have been.

"I *may* hold 'em," he said to himself, between

his teeth. "And by the Lord Harry I'll try hard for it."

He went over to the bank and found Ffrench in his private room, pale and out of all courage.

"There will be a run on us by this time to-morrow," he said. "I see signs of it already."

"Will there?" said Haworth. "We'll see about that. Wait a bit, my lads!"

He went into the town and spent an hour or so taking a sharp look-out. Nothing escaped him. There were more idlers than usual about the ale-houses, and more than once he passed two or three women talking together with anxious faces and in under-tones. As he was passing one such group, one of the women saw him and started.

"Theer he is!" she said, and her companion turned with her, and they both stopped talking to look after him.

Before returning he went up to his partner's house. He asked for Miss Ffrench, and was shown into the room where she sat writing letters. She neither looked pleased nor displeased when

she saw him, but rose to greet him at once. She gave him a rather long look.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

Suddenly he felt less bold. The heat of his excitement failed to sustain him. He was all unstrung.

"I've come to tell you not to go out," he said. "There's trouble afoot—in the trade. There's no knowing how it'll turn out. There's a lot of chaps in th' town who are not in th' mood to see aught that'll fret 'em. They're ready for mischief, and have got drink in 'em. Stay you here until we see which way th' thing's going."

"Do you mean," she demanded, "that there are signs of a strike?"

"There's more than signs of it," he answered, sullenly. "Before night the whole place will be astir."

She moved across the room and pulled the bell. A servant answered the summons instantly.

"I want the carriage," she said.

Then she turned to Haworth, with a smile of actual triumph.

"*Nothing* would keep me at home," she said. "I shall drive through the town and back again. Do you think I will let them fancy that *I* am afraid of them?"

"You're not afraid?" he said, almost in a whisper.

"I afraid?" she answered; "*I*?"

"Wait here," she added.

She left the room, and in less than ten minutes returned. He had never before seen in her the fire he saw then. There was a spark of light in her eyes, a colour on her cheek. She had chosen her dress with distinct care for its luxurious richness. His exclamation, as she entered, buttoning her long delicate glove, was a repressed oath. He exulted in her. His fear for her was gone, and only this exultation remained.

"You've made up your mind to that?" he said. He wanted to make her say more.

"I am going to see your mother," she answered. "That will take me outside the town, then I shall drive back again — slowly. They shall understand me at least."

She let him lead her out to the carriage,

which by this time was waiting. After she was seated in it, she bent forward and spoke to him.

"Tell my father where I am going, and why," she said.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## "A SPEECH."

WHEN he returned to the Works the noon-bell was ringing, and the hands were crowding through the gates on their way to their midday meal. Among those going out he met Floxham, who, as he passed, spoke to him.

"Theer's some o' them chaps," he said, "as wunnot show their faces agen."

"Ay," said Haworth, "I see that."

Ffrench had left the bank and was pacing up and down his room panic-stricken.

"What have you heard?" he exclaimed, turning as Haworth entered. "Is it—is it as bad as you expected?"

"Ay," said Haworth, "worse and better too."

"Better?" he faltered.

Haworth flung himself into a chair. He wore a look of dogged triumph.

"Leave 'em to me," he answered. "I'm in th' mood fur 'em *now*."

But it was not until some time afterward that he delivered the message Rachel French had intrusted to him.


On hearing it her father appeared to rally a little.

"It seems rather a dangerous thing to do," he said, "but—it is like her. And perhaps, after all, there is something in—in showing no fear."

And for a few moments, after having thought the incident over, he became comparatively sanguine and cheerful.

Again there were new places vacant. Mr. Briarley, it may be observed, had been absent all day, and by this time was listening with affectionate interest and spasmodic attacks of inopportune enthusiasm to various inflammatory speeches which were being made at a beer-house.

Toward evening the work lagged so that the over-lookers could no longer keep up the semblance of ignorance. A kind of gloom settled upon them also, and they went about with depressed faces.





"It'll be all up to-morrow," said one, "if there's nothing done."

But something was done.

Suddenly—just before the time for the last bell to ring—Haworth appeared at the door of the principal room.

"Lads!" he shouted, "them on you as wants a speech from Jem Haworth gather in th' yard in five minutes from now."

There was no more work done. The bell began to ring; implements were thrown down and a shout went up from the crowd. Then there was a rush into the yard, and in less than five minutes the outpouring of the place thronged about its chief doorway, where Jem Haworth stood on the topmost step, looking down, facing them all, boldly—with the air of a man who felt his victory more than half won.

"Let's hear what tha'st gotten to say," cried some one well hidden by the crowd. "Out wi' it."

"It's not much," Haworth shouted back. "It's this to start with. I'm here to find out where you chaps stand."

But there was no answer to this. He had known there would be none, and went on.

"I've been through th' place this morning," he said, "and through th' town, and I know how th' wind blows as well as any on you. Th' lads at Marfort and Molton and Dillup are on th' strike. There's a bad look-out in many a place besides them. There's a lot of fools laying in beer and making speeches down in Broxton; there were some here this morning as didn't show this afternoon. How many on you's going to follow them?"

There was a murmur, but it was not easy to understand it. It was a mixture of sounds defiant and conciliatory. Haworth moved forward. He knew them better than they knew him.

"*I'm* not one o' the model soart," he called out. "I've not set up soup-kitchens nor given you flannel petticoats. I've looked sharp after you, and I should have been a fool if I hadn't. I've let you alone out of work hours, and I've not grudged you your sprees, when they didn't stand in my way. I've done the square thing

by you, and I’ve done it by myself. Th’ places I’ve built let no water in, and I let ’em to you as easy as I could and make no loss. I didn’t build ’em for benevolent purposes, but I’ve not heard one of you chaps complain of ’em yet. I’ve given you your dues and stood by you—and I’ll do it again, by ——”

There was a silence—a significant breathless one.

“Have I done it,” he said, “or haven’t I?”

Suddenly the silence was broken.

“Ay,” there was a shout, “ay, lad, yo’ ha’.”

“Then,” he shouted, “them as Jem Haworth has stood by, let ’em stand by Jem Haworth!”

And he struck his big fist upon his open palm with a fierce blow, and stood there before them breathing hard.

He had the best metal on his side somehow, and the best metal carried the day. The boldness of his move, the fact that he had not waited, but had taken the lead, were things all for him. Even those who wavered toward the enemy were stirred to something like admiration.

“But what about th’ Union?” said a timorous

voice in the rear. "Theer'll be trouble with th' Unions as sure as we stand out, Mester."

Haworth made a movement none of them understood. He put his hand behind him and drew from his hip-pocket an object which caused every man of them to give a little start and gasp. They were used to simple and always convenient modes of defence. The little object he produced would not have startled an American, but it startled a Lancashire audience. It was of shining steel and rosewood, and its bright barrels glittered significantly. He held it out and patted it lightly—with a terrible lightness.

"That's for the Union, lads," he said. "And more like it."

A few of the black sheep moved restlessly and with manifest tremor. This was a new aspect of affairs. One of them suddenly cried out with much feebleness :

"Th—three cheers for Haworth."

"Let the chaps as are on the other side go to their lot now," said Haworth.

But no one moved.

"There's some here that'll go when th' time

comes," he announced. "Let 'em tell what they've heard. Now, lads, the rest on you up with your hands."

The whole place was in a tumult. They held up their hands and clenched and shook them and shouted, and here and there swore with fluency and enthusiasm. There were not six among them who were not fired with the general friendly excitement.

"To-morrow morning there'll be papers posted up, writ in Jem Haworth's hand and signed with his name," cried Haworth. "Read 'em as you come along, lads, and when you reach here I'll be ready for you."

"Is it," faltered the timorous voice, "about th' pistols?"

"Ay," Haworth answered, "about th' pistols. Now go home."

He turned to mount the step, flushed and breathing fast and with high-beating pulses, but suddenly he stopped. Before the iron gate a carriage had stopped. A servant in livery got down and opened the door, and Rachel Ffrench stepped out. The men checked their shouting

to look at her. She came up the yard slowly and with the setting sun shining upon her. It was natural that they should gaze at her as she approached, though she did not look at any of them—only at Haworth, who waited. They made a pathway for her and she passed through it and went up the step. Her rich dress touched more than one man as she swept by.

"I thought," they heard her say, "that I would call for my father."

Then for the first time she looked at the men. She turned at the top of the step and looked down—the sun on her dress and face.

There was not a man among them who did not feel the look. At first a murmur arose and then an incoherent cry and then a shout, and they threw up their caps and shouted until they were hoarse.

In the midst of it she turned aside and went in with a smile on her lips.

In Haworth's room they found her father standing behind the door with a startled air.

"What are they shouting for?" he asked.  
"What is the matter now?"

"I think *I* am the matter," Miss Ffrench answered, "though I scarcely know why. Ah," giving him a quiet glance, "you are afraid!"

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## "SARARANN."

THE next morning there was an uproar in the town. The strikers from Molton and Marfort no longer remained in the shade. They presented themselves openly to the community in the characters they had assumed. At first they lounged about in groups at the corners and before the ale-houses, smoking, talking, gesticulating, or wearing sullen faces. But this negative state of affairs did not last long. By eight o'clock the discovery was made that something had happened in the night.

In a score of prominent positions,—on walls and posts,—there appeared papers upon which was written in a large, bold hand, the following announcement:—

"Haworth's lads will stand by him. The chaps that have aught to say against this, let them remember that to every



man there's six barrels well loaded, and to Jem Haworth twelve. Those that want their brass out of Broxton Bank, let them come and get it.

"Writ and signed by

"JEM HAWORTH."

The first man who saw it swore aloud and ran to call others. Soon a select party stood before the place on which the card was posted, confronting it in different moods. Some were scientifically profane, some raged loudly, some were silent, one or two grinned.

"He staid up aw neet to do that theer," remarked one of these. "He's gotten a gizzard o' his own, has Haworth. He's done it wi' his own hands."

One gentleman neither grinned nor swore. His countenance fell with singular rapidity. This was Mr. Briarley, who had come up in the rear. He held a pewter pot in one hand which was half empty. He had caught it up, in the heat of the moment, from the table at which he had been sitting when the news came.

"What's in th' barrils?" he inquired.

The man he spoke to turned to him roughly.

"Powder," he answered, "an' lead, tha domned foo'!"

Mr. Briarley looked at his mug regretfully.

"I thowt," he said, "as happen it mought ha' bin beer."

Having reflected a moment, he was on the point of raising the mug to his lips when a thought struck him. He stopped short.

"What's he goin' to do wi' 'em?" he quavered.

"Ax him," was the grim answer. "Ax him, lad. He dunnot say."

"He is na—" in manifest trepidation, "he is na—goin' to—to fire 'em off!"

"He'll fire 'em off, if he comes across thee," was the reply. "Mak' sure o' that. An' I should na blame him, neyther."

Mr. Briarley reflected again for a few seconds—reflected deeply. Then he moved aside a little.

"I hannot seen Sararann sin' yesterday," he said, softly, "nor yet Janey, nor yet—th' owd missus. I—I mun go and see 'em."

Haworth kept his word. The next day there was not a man who went to and from the Works who could not have defended himself if he had

been attacked. But no one was attacked. His course was one so unheard of, so unexpected, that it produced a shock. There was a lull in the movement, at least. The number of his enemies increased and were more violent, but they were forced to content themselves with violence of speech. Somehow, it scarcely seemed safe to use ordinary measures against Jem Haworth. He slept in his room at the Works, and shared watches with the force he had on guard. He drove through the town boldly, and carried a grim, alert face. He was here, and there, and everywhere; in the Works, going from room to room; at the bank, ready for emergencies.

"When this here's over," he said, "I'll give you chaps a spree you won't get over in a bit, by George!"

Those who presented themselves at the bank the morning the placards were to be seen got their money. By noon the number arriving diminished perceptibly. In a day or two a few came back, and would have handed over their savings again willingly, but the bank refused to take them.

"Carry it to Manchester," were Haworth's words. "They'll take it there—I won't."

Those of his hands who had deserted him came out of their respective "sprees" in a week's time, with chop-fallen countenances. They had not gained anything, and were somehow not in great favour among the outside strikers. In their most pronounced moods, they had been neither useful nor ornamental to their party. They were not eloquent, nor even violent; they were simply idle vagabonds, who were no great loss to Haworth and no great gain to his enemies. In their own families they were in deep and dire disgrace, and loud were the ratings they received from their feminine relatives.

The lot of Mr. Briarley was melancholy indeed. Among the malcontents his portion was derision and contumely; at home he was received with bewailings and scathing severity.

"An' that theer was what tha wur up to, was it?" cried Mrs. Briarley, the day he found himself compelled by circumstances to reveal the true state of affairs. "Tha'rt j'ined th' strikers, has tha?"

“Ay, Sararann, I’ve j’ined ’em — an’ — an’ we’re goin’ to set things straight, bless yo’—that’s what we’re goin’ to do. We—we’re goin’ to bring the mesters down a bit, an’—an’ get our dues. That’s what we’re goin’ to do, Sararann.”

It was dinner-time, and in the yard and about the street at the front the young members of the family disported themselves with vigour. Without Janey and the baby, who were in the house, there were ten of them. Mrs. Briarley went to the door and called them. Roused to frantic demonstrations of joy by the immediate prospect of dinner, they appeared in a body, tumbling over each other, shrieking, filling the room to overflowing.

Generally they were disposed of in relays, for convenience’ sake. It was some time since Mr. Briarley had beheld the whole array. He sat upright and stared at them. Mrs. Briarley sat down confronting him.

“What art tha goin’ to do wi’ *them* while tha bring th’ mesters down?” she inquired.

Mr. Briarley regarded the assembly with *naïve*

bewilderment. A natural depression of spirit set in.

“Theer—theer seems a good many on ’em, Sararann,” he said, with an air of meek protestation. “They seem to ha’—to ha’ cumylated!”

“Theer’s twelve on ’em,” answered Mrs. Briarley, drily, “and they’ve all gotten mouths, as tha sees. An’ their feyther’s goin’ to bring th’ mesters down a bit!”

Twelve pairs of eyes stolidly regarded their immediate progenitor, as if desirous of discovering his intentions. Mr. Briarley was embarrassed.

“Sararann,” he faltered, “send ’em out to play ’em. Send ’em out into th’ open air. It’s good fur ’em, th’ open air is, an’ they set a mon back.”

Mrs. Briarley burst into lamentations, covering her face with her apron and rocking to and fro.

“Ay,” cried she, “send ’em out in th’ air—happen they’ll fatten on it. It’s aw they’ll get, poor childer. Let ’em mak’ th’ most on it.”

In these days Haworth was more of a lion than ever. He might have dined in state with a social potentate each day if he had been so

mind. The bolder spirits visited him at the Works, and would have had him talk the matter over. But he was in the humour for neither festivities nor talk. He knew what foundation his safety rested upon, and spent many a sleepless and feverish night. He was bitter enough at heart against those he had temporarily baffled.

"Wait till tha'rt out o' th' woods," he said to Ffrench, when he was betrayed into his expressing his sense of relief.

Oddly enough, the feeling against Ffrench was disproportionately violent. He was regarded as an alien and a usurper of the rights of others. There existed a large disgust for his gentle birth and breeding, and a sardonic contempt for his incapacity and lack of experience. He had no prestige of success and daring, he had not shown himself in the hour of danger, he took all and gave nothing.

"I should not be surprised," said Miss Ffrench to Murdoch, "if we have trouble yet."





